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## ABOUT PEOPLE





# ABOUT PEOPLE

A BOOK FOR PARENTS, TEACHERS, MINISTERS  
AND THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES

BY

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## PREFACE

AGAIN and again, while working at this book, the thought has obtruded itself, "How can you go on with this book-making business, when you have no guarantee that before it is finished certain world convulsions may not sweep away all familiar institutions, including publishing houses?" Or the question has taken the form, "How can you be content to concern yourself with all these problems of the inner life when the one great issue before mankind is whether Fascism is going to destroy all individual liberty, or whether Communism is going to plunge us in civil war? How can you work quietly in some retired spot when all men of spirit ought to be out in the open contending at all times and among all classes for the truths which alone offer a foundation for a stable civilization? Are you not like some man who should be found collecting postage stamps or doing elaborate wood-carving while the explosives are being gathered which will blow up our world? What does it matter whether individuals achieve psychological and spiritual adjustment, when it remains uncertain whether people are going to be left with the bare necessities of existence, and when the whole stability of the material foundation of life is threatened?"

Or still further it might be asked, "How can you occupy yourself in trying to advise young ministers how to be good pastors when the churches themselves are being tried at the bar of mankind, and the verdict is in doubt? Can you be sure that in ten years' time there will be any churches offering to young men careers as pastors?"

Perhaps the most sincere answer to such queries would be to say simply that I have passed the age when aggressive propaganda work and active organization are possible to me, and that I must needs fall back upon such activities as remain open. Campaigns to arouse the public and initiate new movements are for the young and the middle-aged. For my part, the management of my own diary fully exhausts all my present capacities for organization.

But that is not my real answer to the questions stated above. It would not seem to me an unmitigated calamity if this civilization fell, but whether it stands or falls the problem of the individual life will remain for the individual inescapable and fundamental. I would like to see all men and women relieved from material anxiety and possessed of something more than a sufficiency of material things, and I believe that within the next century or two that result is certain to be achieved. It is unthinkable that we should continue to consent to starve in a world of plenty. But during all the years when that result is being achieved, and after it has been achieved, the problem for the individual of attaining real adjustment and liberation will remain insistent. When war, poverty, and social injustice

belong only to the shameful past, it will still be a matter of quite central importance whether parents and children learn together the ways of life; whether men and women, being rightly adjusted to sex, find freedom and joy; whether one by one people escape from their fears and their illusions and live fully and gladly; whether the way to a wholesome and creative religion is understood; whether men learn how to face truly the eternal verities and the stable experiences of life—love, pain, disappointment, and death. For these elements of life will remain under any conceivable social order.

My blood began to boil fifty years ago over our infamous social injustices, and I thank God that my temperature has never fallen to normal in that connection. But the intervals of a life much occupied with social propaganda have for the last twenty years been increasingly filled with attempts to help individuals involved in the coiled perplexities of life. I find the same personal problems (with modifications) among the exploited and the exploiters, among the poor and the rich, among the ignorant and the highly educated.

Inevitably I am increasingly concerned about these personal questions which will remain after the revolution, or the evolution, into social order and justice.

And as to churches and ministers, I can quite imagine that as we know them they may pass away. They have not been conspicuously successful of late. All that is true in their traditions is eternal, but as institutions they are not in their present form essential

to mankind. But when they have gone, if go they do, the hunger of men for God will remain as great as ever, and the appeal of Jesus of Nazareth to all that is best in us will be stronger than ever. And therefore fellowships of men and women bound together by interest in Jesus, and engaged in common worship and spiritual search will continue to exist across the world. And the secrets of spiritual health and serenity will be just what they are now.

The conclusions of this book may be rejected, but the problems it handles are not of this age in any special sense. Therefore I have gladly spent many hours in trying to put in order my contribution to their solution, and I offer no apology for doing so. Therefore, too, though the Student Movement Publishing House may be wrecked by a bomb before my manuscript reaches it, I have gone on in hope. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow: and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." The clouds over Europe are very dark to-day, but I have looked away from them to find truths of hope and promise even for those who must live in the shadows.

I began this book meaning to write a short book for ministers. It then took the law into its own hands and developed into a much larger book for nearly everybody. I have therefore put into Part III three chapters of thoughts which I want to share specially with younger ministers, and I now send the book out in the hope that it may prove of some use to people in general, and especially to parents, teachers, and all who work either among the young or among the troubled people of the world.

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# PART I

## OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE AND ITS PHASES AND DIFFICULTIES

### CHAPTER I

#### THE HEALING OF SOULS

THE good news which is the kernel of the Christian religion has been presented in Protestant circles in the main, and sometimes almost exclusively, as a message of hope to sin-burdened souls. And every year numbers of such people find their deliverance through the Christian message thus presented. But the majority of the people in any community are not consciously sin-burdened souls. And they are apt to feel that the Christian message does not meet their cases. Yet they *are* missing their full life. They are for manifold reasons in real need; but they do not feel that a message about forgiveness fits them. Therefore those who are to help them must come to understand what those actual needs are and must attain a sympathetic familiarity with the moods, perplexities and sufferings of real people. That is a much more difficult thing than the mastering of a theology. It cannot be done in a study, nor by reading books—not even books on psychology. It cannot be done through any official or formal relations to people, and it is achieved much more by

the use of the imagination and the heart than by any activity of mere cold reason.

It has been done—probably very often. I have known teachers, doctors, and ministers who have become in time true healers of souls. As the years have gone on they have attained to insight and intuitive understanding. Men and women have been able to feel about them that they could be trusted to understand and to help. They have acquired real stores of knowledge and have become masters in the divine art of Christian friendship.

But I have one complaint to make about them. Very rarely have they even tried to share with others the knowledge they have acquired. Their stores of experience have died with them. They have left others to begin again at the beginning, and to learn as they learnt—laboriously and through a good deal of avoidable failure. So far as I have been able to discover, Protestant literature contains singularly little that is calculated to help the student of human nature on its religious side. We ministers got no help from our forerunners as we came to face this part of our work.

And hence this book.

I do not claim to be one of those masters of the art of healing of whom I have spoken. I am still a learner and I am often defeated. But circumstances have combined to give me a very varied experience of men and women—young and middle-aged. Large numbers of people have honoured me with their confidence. Many of them have gone on to bless me with their friendship. And so inevit-

ably I have come to know many things about real people, and as I realize what a help it would have been to know them thirty years ago, I am constrained to try to help those who will come after me.

Having worked a great deal among students both in Europe and across the Atlantic, I have met men and women at a stage in life when they were willing to be very frank, and as many of them have remained my friends I have been allowed to enter with them into their experiences in post-graduate days. With the help that they thus gave me, I have found the key to the understanding of people of many other kinds, who have had their education only in the great university of life.

I dislike hackneyed words, but if I may use one I would say that for years I have carried on a very informal spiritual and moral clinic, and have been trying through conversations and letters to help a very great variety of persons.

The confidences they have given me are the most sacred possession of my life. I hope not to betray any single one of them through these pages. And if any of my friends should recognize themselves in anything I have written, they will not, I am sure, be reluctant to be used in this way for the helping of others. I think all these people, taken together, would be surprised if they knew how much I have loved them, and love them still. Real people have carried me by storm. Though they have come to discuss their failures, confess their sins, and share their perplexities, they have left me an enthusiastic believer in human beings. They have such varied

charms. They possess such beautiful qualities, even while they are still only in the process of finding themselves. They are so interesting with a certain divine interest.

Politicians with a large experience of men and women in the mass, often, I believe, become cynical about human nature. But those who even try to sympathize with and help individuals are certain as the years pass to come to understand more and more how possible it was for Jesus to love everybody whom He met. As a race we may still be ignorant, stupid, and quarrelsome, and therefore our corporate life is still often muddled and futile. But one by one we are lovable. I have found the divine spark over and over again in people who began by showing me their ugliness and their folly. I have found that "something which can be loved" in person after person though I knew them to begin with as drunkards, or deceivers, or snobs, or failures in connection with sex, or partially hypocrites, or hysterical weaklings.

The days are too few and the years are too short for the enjoyment of the attractions of real people when you know them. And life becomes a better and a better thing as the number of our real contacts with others increases.

This book is therefore based on experiences which have created in me a great gratitude. I have disliked some of the routine work of the ministry, and have reached a point when a committee meeting, or an ecclesiastical gathering is a heavy cross. But a calling which gives to a man the key to human hearts is a calling for which any man might be truly grate-

ful, even though he feels it so high a calling that he despairs of ever being worthy of it. I revere human personality with more and not less sincerity as I have come to know many persons, and I hold it a sacred privilege to be allowed to share life with many of them.

And I have this word which I would like here to address especially to young ministers. When you look at an ordinary congregation you are very apt to think, "These good, church-going people look all right. They cannot have any special problems and worries. They look 'established in the faith' and rooted in sound morality." But will you take it from me that that is quite a wrong impression. Some of those regular church-goers face in private and with great sadness the fact that they are strangers to real religion. Some feel that they have lost a religion which once they had. Some are perplexed, and for that reason in pain. Some are fear-ridden. Some are finding home life so trying that they hardly know how to endure it. Some of those married couples have a dark shadow on their marriages. Some have a definitely wrong streak in their lives—in business or in home life, or in their secret hours alone. Many have wounded hearts, and have found that love brings pain. All without exception need closer contact with the healing love of God. Your heart might almost break with sympathy if you knew all the truth. But at least you would never think again that these people do not need the ministry of someone who knows, even partially, the secret of inward peace and victory.

## CHAPTER II

### LIFE'S NORMAL COURSE

#### SOME DANGEROUS GENERALITIES

ALL generalizations are dangerous because to all of them there are so many exceptions, and about the exceptions generalizations suggest what is not true. None the less they are a way of suggesting truths of some value. Indeed they are the only way in which to sum up a mass of evidence.

The matter about which I propose to generalize is the normal religious history of men and women. If I can achieve any approximations to the truth on that subject they may help ministers by telling them what to expect, and they may reassure individual people by suggesting to them that there is nothing exceptional about the ups and downs—the actions and the reactions, which so often distress them.

I begin my story about the age of fifteen. It is a lovely age. Young men and girls are very shy then, but intensely alive and sensitive. They are terribly observant, and open to all sorts of impressions. They are so fresh, so eager, so gay and fearless. They are also so crude, so incoherent, so ignorant of the real world, and so immensely wrong in many of their views. How could it be other-

wise! It was exactly so with us in our day. But let parents, teachers and ministers beware how they treat those ignorant and mistaken views. If the young are laughed at for them, or treated roughly, they will probably say nothing; but they will have been deeply wounded, and the outflow of their vigour will have received a serious check. There are to-day large numbers of men and women living frightened, timid, and ineffective lives largely because at that stage in life they were repressed and treated with contempt by older persons. The young are very serious at this age underneath their gay exterior. I plead in the name of their divine importance for a very respectful treatment of all their feelings, ideals, opinions, and purposes. We must encourage them to think, not make fun of their thoughts. They want to be independent, which only means that they want to be persons. We must help them on their way and not entangle them by our use of authority. The fact that they differ from us is the main hope of the world. If they were willing in some docile way to take on our customs, views, and manners, then our "good custom might corrupt the world." And that is making the large assumption that all our customs are good.

Never was this particular caution more needed than to-day. So much in our tradition has been proved futile in face of to-day's challenge. With our received ideas we get no further. The old minds of the world are being compelled to confess their helplessness. The young are the hope of mankind. And there is hope in them only if they will



dare to differ from us. I thank God that it is impossible wholly to crush or restrain them. The new life that is in them will out. Yet individuals can be crushed, and thousands of them have been. It is a process akin to murder. And it is often done by people who think they love the young—which is why the young often dislike most the older people who fuss about them most conscientiously. Yet, of course, while the young want so much to be independent, it is equally true that they soon find out they cannot. They are constantly being puzzled by the world—sometimes appalled by it. They find themselves frequently beaten by life, and at such times they want very much the help of persons of experience. They will come and ask for our help if we do not offer it obtrusively. They will even want us to decide questions for them, and will lean on us more than we may think wholesome. But we are needed at that stage in the lives of the young, and we will be used if we can qualify for the privilege.

I remember being at one stage terribly shy of students, who, of course, belong to the class I am talking about. They seemed in the mass so sure of themselves—so critical of all older people—so dogmatic and argumentative. They asserted so vehemently, and ridiculed so freely. Fearsome creatures! And then I got to know individuals among them one by one, and they proceeded to show me a very different side of themselves. I found many of them in sore perplexity. Many of them underneath their surface gaiety were deeply troubled and sad. Without words they asked for

sympathy. In clear words they asked for advice. They wanted so much to talk things out, and they revealed no dogmatic assurance, but doubts, fears, distrust of themselves, and manifold confusions of mind and heart. It was impossible any longer to fear them. It was also impossible not to wish one was more fitted to help.

And here I wish to insert a very definite opinion I have come to hold that is relevant at this point. I believe the great majority of young men and women need at this stage the help of someone outside their own families. I believe this is true even when the young persons concerned have very good parents. For the young think they know already all that their parents would say if they did consult them; and their revolt is generally in part a revolt against the received ideas of their own families. On the other hand they are ready to be impressed by the ideas and the counsels of fresh people. They are often both disinclined and unable to give their full confidence to their parents at this stage, because those parents believe they know all about their children already. And emphatically they do not. At this stage there is a new and shy self beginning to blossom out in every young person, and the young person can only show that new self to someone who is willing to recognize it and appreciate it. And so an outsider is needed at this stage. It is often a school-teacher, or a don, or some older person who has the capacity for friendship with the young. Sometimes it is a minister.

The earlier part of this stage in life is notoriously

the period of greatest religious susceptibility, and it is also, I believe, a period of great spiritual capacity. It is between the ages of fourteen and seventeen that boys and girls are most open to the appeal of Christ, and most sensitive about spiritual truth. This is the age at which conversions most often occur in circles where that good New Testament word is still used. This is the age at which boys and girls frequently "decide for Christ." The experience occurs in infinitely varying degrees of sincerity and depth. But this is the age at which it is plainly most natural that it should occur. On the threshold of responsible life, in the doorway of the adult world, the young in thousands know that it is time to choose for good or evil. And so, many choose Christ and begin an adolescent religious life.

It is a common thing to hear this adolescent religion spoken of with contempt. It is said to be crude, raw, ultra-emotional, priggish, unstable, morbid, etc., etc. And it is often implied that it might be as well to try to save the young from it. To which I should like to be allowed to reply with an emphatic, boisterous and dogmatic "Nonsense!" Of course adolescent religion is emotional because adolescent life is emotional, and it is of the first importance that the emotions of this period should find some wholesome outlet. Of course it is unstable because a young person is in an unstable condition. But religion is the best road to stability, as thousands have found. Of course it is crude and ignorant, and notoriously it is often accompanied by outrageous views. But that is largely the fault of

parents, teachers, and ministers for not giving the young better teaching. Very often, too, adolescent religion has an element of priggishness in it. The first coltish manifestation of a zeal for righteousness is often a zeal about the unrighteousness of other people. Which of course is a pity. But to go through a stage of being a bit of a prig is probably inevitable for many people on their road to moral sanity, and is a vast deal better than lapsing into moral laxity at seventeen or eighteen. Further, the priggish stage can be greatly shortened if the young encounter older people with a sound and sane moral outlook. Which fact is another call to all who encounter the young.

Yet while I dissent from the depreciation of adolescent religion, I regret with my whole heart the fact that so many religious young people are rabbits. A human rabbit is a person without a healthy interest in athletics, society, politics, the other sex, and vigorous life in general. And such people abound in many youthful religious societies. Of course some people were born rabbits and brought up in hutches. And some seem to be condemned to "rabbitness" by a certain all-round lack of vitality. They are timid, shy, and take to religion on the "safety first" principle. Which is not only very sad, but involves a very real mistake about religion. For the Christian religion is not safe. It is very dangerous. It is not a call to retreat from life, but a summons to meet the challenge of life bravely and fully. It also has in it the secret of high vitality. For which latter reason I never

despair of rabbits. Their case is not hopeless at all, and indeed there is something deeply wrong with the teaching and preaching offered to the young if they show themselves content to remain rabbits.

A certain number of rabbits offer themselves for the ministry. I wish bishops and responsible committees would refuse them. They do a vast deal of damage to the church and to young souls. I saw an ordained rabbit lately, with the sort of fixed smile on his face that is calculated to produce atheists. Poor lad! And he might have had that smile cured, and have become a decent sort if he had lived in another and a robuster world.

From which digression I return to the point that it is the business of older Christians to help the young to find real religion in their adolescent years, and to serve them in such ways as may save them from the perils of the way. I believe in enthusiastic services for the young. I believe in the value of occasional very impressive gatherings in which emotion is sure to be stirred. I have always believed, and still do, in the big tent meetings of the Student Christian Movement at Swanwick. And I believe still more in quiet, personal approaches to the young with intent to lead them to definite decisions; for if these years we are thinking of are passed without some such definite decision a great opportunity is lost and later life is made more difficult.

But then I also believe intensely in solid painstaking teaching of the young at this period. I know that they need the discipline of study in connection with religion, and that nothing else is so

good a counterweight to their hours of feeling. I have had many, many proofs that if this teaching is given honestly and thoroughly it may save the young from uncounted troubles later on. Adolescents are not greatly given to intellectual criticism, but are rather receptive. On the other hand, people in the twenties are fiercely critical. And so it happens that if as adolescents they have been allowed to associate religion with "impossible views," they are sure to have a rude awakening, and to fall into distress of mind. But if they are able to say, "My teachers, or my minister, never taught me those obsolete views of things," they are going to be greatly helped. The ministers and other teachers who work hard at their Bible classes, and who are perfectly honest in such classes—hiding none of the difficulties—can hardly know what good work they are doing. For the benefit of such work may only appear in later years, when it may be that these teachers have lost touch with their former scholars.

And then still further, I know how all important it is at this stage of life to help the young to find things to *do* in connection with their religion. That is where the great value of such organizations as the Scouts and Guides and the Boys' Brigade comes in. They are cleverly contrived to give the young manifold chances of self-expression, and of service to others. If they are not available some substitute must be found. For a religion that consists merely either in holding doctrines or in having feelings is a morbid thing. The young want to *do*. They really only believe in practical religion. And

if they find the right kind of practice they are almost sure to develop on sound lines.

#### THE STAGE OF REACTION

I cannot specify the exact years for this stage. It may begin at nineteen, or not till twenty-five. It may be over in a year or two, or it may last in a measure through life. It is the most difficult and often the most painful stage in the religious life. I cannot say it is more than "almost universal," for a few escape it. But it is very general, and on the whole it is wholesome. People who in middle life have a stable and yet living religion have generally been through it.

It is the result of a first acquaintance with the real world of thought and affairs, accompanied by the lower emotional tone which follows the years of adolescence. We do well to expect it, and to treat it gently. A great many men and women feel at some point in the twenties that they have actually lost their religion. They no longer feel as they did. The religious services, which used to help them, help them no more. They find prayer a difficulty, if not an impossibility. The real world as it confronts them when they first go into business or some profession seems inconsistent with the ideals they cherished in the days of their immaturity. The big men in that world seem to take no account of religion, and the talk and conduct of great numbers suggest that it has no existence. Some, under the stress of new temptations, do things which seem to constitute a fatal break with the old life.

They discover further that many able men on intellectual grounds repudiate the very foundation on which religion rests, and that some of the views they had been holding are quietly discarded by many clever minds as simply obsolete. Further, they find that the kind of religion they have been accustomed to is only one of many kinds. Their church loses some of its hold on them because they find that other churches dissent from its positions. Some of them, of course, were brought up in what was for them the wrong church, and when they make that discovery it proves very upsetting.

Into a great many lives at this stage romantic love enters with such engrossing strength that all other interests suffer and religion is simply forgotten. Because young people are generally by this time almost completely independent they tend to abandon many old habits, including that of church attendance, and so they escape from direct religious influences.

Finally, it seems to many that religion is not the necessary thing they once thought. A young man in one of my congregations once challenged me to prove that we *must* be religious. He had been meeting a lot of people who seemed to get on quite well without it, some of whom were really good people. He wanted to know therefore why he should take pains to cultivate his religion and submit to its restraints. He was inclined to regard it as a sort of hobby, which attracted some people and was irrelevant to many others.

And so partly because they are no longer sure about it, partly because they no longer wish it to be



true, partly because they are taken up with other things, partly because they enjoy reacting against old family and church traditions, and partly through sheer carelessness, many people let their religion die—or seem to die—between the ages of twenty and thirty.

What I have said is, of course, an overstatement with regard to many, but it is also an understatement with regard to others. Certainly every minister becomes soon familiar with these facts. Faces he had observed with pleasure in church for some years appear there no more. Workers drop out of the ranks. Friends of his own appear no longer to be sympathetic, and rather avoid him.

I am not forgetting that at almost *any* point in life a fundamental religious experience is possible to men and women. All evangelical movements can tell of people who have "found Christ" at all ages from fifteen to eighty. Conversions during the period of eighteen to twenty-five are far from uncommon. I would greatly deplore it if anything I write here should lead any minister to cease to expect and to pray for such blessed experiences among the people under his care who are at this stage of life. And I would be equally distressed if any man or woman whose adolescent days are past should imagine that he or she is not capable of having a great, gracious and life-transforming experience. God is not limited to times and seasons.

None the less, it remains true that many who seemed to make a promising beginning as disciples of Christ appear to fall into a state of indifference,

and even of avowed agnosticism. They become critical, cynical, and unsympathetic towards all manifestations of religion. Often they set out on married life without any avowed faith, and proceed to set up a family without any acknowledgment of God. And that means a bad beginning.

But though these things make me sad, they do not make me as sad as they used to. For I have found that religion is not really dead in many of such people. It is only in abeyance. Human beings have to go through very deep readjustments at this stage of life. They have to find themselves in a new and larger world. They have to learn to know and understand their awakened selves. A religion that was to a considerable degree a matter of the emotions has to be recaptured as a matter of conviction. Beliefs and opinions have to be sifted. And all that takes time.

I once had it said to me by one who was very dear to me, "I am afraid you cannot help me in this. I have got to work it out for myself." Often that is true, and we can only stand aside and watch and care and pray and love. I am quite unable to agree with the people—and they are many to-day—who counsel an indiscriminate use of intrusive and almost forcible methods of approach. They record their successes. But they do not, and cannot record the cases in which they have hurt sensitive souls, and hardened people in an attitude of opposition.

And yet I wish to record this fact—I know of one great woman who at a point in the thirties became actively and wholeheartedly religious, and

who said to a younger woman, "Oh, you can go on neglecting all these things for years, till you meet someone who simply *won't let you* do so any longer, and in my case the someone was ——." As a matter of fact, the unnamed man was her minister—and not, incidentally, the present writer. Truly human beings are a difficult study, and need delicate and sensitive handling.

Sometimes people in this stage need help in grappling with definitely intellectual problems. They are honestly in doubt. And then anyone who has himself faced things honestly can render real service. He may do so by word of mouth. He may often do better still by lending such people the right books—books which will help people to assimilate the results of sincere modern thinking. I endorse here a sentence which I read lately in a publication of the Free Church Fellowship: "Christian writers such as Streeter, Oman, Raven, H. G. Wood and MacMurray are out-thinking men like Julian Huxley, Wells, Shaw, Russell, and the rest."

Sometimes what people in these years need is relief from some obsession, and the comfort that will come from open confession—not necessarily at all of sin, but often of trouble, sorrow, and perplexity. And that help older people can often give if the young will but turn to them. But let us remember that we *cannot* force confidences, and ought not to try.

Often all that we can do is just to be there as friends, and to go on believing in such people and hoping about them. And we may have to go on

sorrowing for years, not necessarily because such people are going astray, but because their lives continue to be unilluminated by the love of God. On the whole, I have found it true that as people come to face the great staple experiences of life they begin to discover for themselves their need of God. It is quite possible for a young man to say that he sees no need whatever for religion while he merely carries on a secure round of commonplace life. He may go into business and get on fairly well, and then fill up his leisure with golf, tennis, the theatre, dancing, social intercourse, music, reading, and so on. And for that simple round he may feel sufficient in himself. He may not know while he lives it that he has not yet really found life at all. But when the great things begin to break in on him the case is altered.

In face of a great love with its tremendous attendant responsibilities, or of parentage, or of sorrow, or of death, or of pain, or of fierce bodily temptation, he may discover how small and weak he is in himself. It is when life threatens to break us that many of us feel our first real need of God.

And at such times, I notice, people often return. After a year or two of marriage young husbands and wives often experience a rebirth of their religious sense. Or when they face the question of their children and begin to think about their future, they find that it will not do any longer to treat God as non-existent. A good many people can live themselves as if there were no God, but *very* few can deliberately bring up their children as atheists.

Further, when the acute self-absorption which characterizes a man's first years in business and marriage has passed away and he begins to observe the world with intelligent interest, he is very likely to recognize for himself the fact that without a saving religion the world is lost; and then he will recover his interest in religion, which he had never really lost, and so resume his spiritual pilgrimage. The case of Robert Louis Stevenson, who in the early twenties was a dogmatic atheist, and in middle life returned to a very simple and sincere faith, is only one of thousands. So let us watch and hope and wait for the chance of being of use, which will come every now and then.

It is a very difficult period of life for many—this period from twenty to thirty. Conventionally it is supposed to be part of "glorious youth," and therefore filled with high spirits, gaiety, and the sense of being on the top of life. Actually it is also a period full of reactions into depression, of fears, of moods and worries, and of oscillations of feeling generally.

I remember a woman who, having joined the church at the age of eighteen, rejoined with me at the age of twenty-eight. And the second event, though it meant far more than the first, was also infinitely more difficult. She had great joy and clear conviction at eighteen. At twenty-eight she could merely say that amidst many perplexities she was in her own way aware of God, and with great diffidence was willing to commit herself to Christ. But time has shown that that second event meant everything, and was the real adjustment of her life.

## MIDDLE LIFE

There is a third stage in the soul's normal life which can be recognized. I mean the period known as "the forties," and on the whole the later forties.

Of course it has its biological characteristics. It is the point in life when a man's first access of vital energy seems to have spent itself, and a certain fatigue or inertness threatens to descend upon him. It is the point at which his zest in many things definitely wanes. All the more energetic pleasures pall a little. They at least no longer thrill. Athletics, dancing, theatre-going, and active social intercourse cease to yield the old pleasure. A man may have had many reactions into boredom long ere this. But they passed. Somewhere in sight of fifty a definite and permanent change has taken place, and makes itself felt. Life of the old kind is never again going to satisfy. With some, the interest of their work remains absorbing right on into old age. But with a great many it does not. It has become a very familiar affair, and its possibilities no longer seem great. Indeed, the thought of going on with it for another twenty years or so is chilling.

And so at this point in life many a man is like a ship becalmed. The sails flutter. The outlook is depressing. And, of course, with some people this occurs as early as the thirties. Notoriously it is at this stage that many men try in foolish ways to recover the old zest in life. Many try alcohol, and

with its help achieve a spurious sense of well-being and hilarity. Thousands have tried through a new romantic adventure to regain something of the wonder of their lost youth. And that, of course, is why this is a critical period in the story of many marriages. Women often try in harmless if pathetic ways to clutch their departing "youngness," and then hide from the world the fatigues they incur in the attempt. Sometimes also their experiments are far from harmless. Many seem at this stage to be driven hither and thither by a consuming restlessness. The psychologists tell us that all these refusals to accept the stage in life at which we have really arrived are, in fact, most ageing. Trying to be what you cannot really be is always exhausting. It needs no science to know that.

And yet I believe that very many people are prepared to say with me that at this point in life "the best is yet to be." For those who handle this crisis rightly it comes to seem that all the years before were mere preparation, and that real life only begins after the early heats and the misadventures of apprenticeship are over.

Of course this is not true in all connections. Great artistic creations have, for the most part, been achieved by the young. Organization, aggression, and adventure are natural to youth, and youth should be given scope for the use of their powers in this direction. The man who has not done good work in his business or profession by forty-five will rarely do it afterwards. The acquiring of knowledge must come long ere this or it will never come at all.

But in the life of the spirit the afternoon and the evening of life are the great periods. Those who achieve liberation and adjustment—who attain to some unification of their personalities—taste then what serenity is. Just because the early fevers are over a new sensitiveness to God—as He appears at a hundred points in life—develops. Just because a man has run through the obvious pleasures and interests of life and found them not enough, he is ready for the great satisfaction to be found only in God. And having found his God a man is also able to find a new and intense, if also a much quieter, joy in the simple contents of a normal life. Because he is no longer harassed by inward turmoils and has escaped the friction of contending desires, he is free to love other people. And loving them finds life. I remember being very much impressed by a testimony on this point. I had been preaching to the cadets and the Staff College at Sandhurst, and afterwards the General said to me, “Padre, if you had said that a time was coming when these youngsters would no longer find any joy in a horse or cricket or shooting and such things, we would have told you you were wrong. But when you said that a day was coming when they would declare concerning all of them that they are *not enough*; we older men all know that you were right.”

At the point in life of which I am speaking two paths confront all men and women. The one that involves no recognition of God and no sense of His presence leads to increasing dullness and weariness—often to cynicism and bitterness. How acrid the



criticism often is! And to what morbid inward disease it is due! Walking on that path is really a slow process of dying.

The other path, which does involve a conscious recognition of God, leads to the great reconciliations beyond which lies our peace—reconciliations to life, to the world, to other people, and to ourselves. It therefore brings a richness into life, unknown before. It stimulates the growth of a man's real powers of appreciation and understanding, and creates a new sensitiveness to the beauty and the meaning of things, which in his earlier days a man hurried past unheeding. It begets charity and patience, and engenders hope. The elderly people who are such a trial to the young because of their constant criticisms, and their persistent efforts to interfere, are themselves people who have missed the way. They are critical because they are unhappy: and they are difficult to live with because they live themselves with such difficulty and inward pain. But the people who walk with God learn charity because God is love. They love and therefore they believe in mankind, including the young. And they hope because God hopes. They may take darker views of the immediate present, because they have more insight than the inexperienced; but they cannot doubt the ultimate issue of mankind's groaning and travailing, and so have a peace of being which sustains them through all the temporary convulsions of society. If those on the other path do a little dying every day, those on this path live more truly every day, and because living means being in

touch with God who is eternal, they come to think of death as very nearly a negligible and minor event.

I want to raise the question whether ministers, as a rule, think enough about this middle point in the lives of people, and of its immense importance. We are much concerned about the young. But there are greater spiritual possibilities in the middle-aged, and we often overlook them. A man once told me that he had joined my church entirely because I had once preached on the text: "The man was above forty years of age on whom this miracle of healing was wrought." Many men at this stage in life are rather lonely. The young leave them out. They are not ready for the society of the old. Their contemporaries are, or seem to be, too busy for real friendship, or too much taken up with their families. A great many men and women at this stage are no longer receiving either stimulus or comfort from their wives or husbands. They even think they have exhausted the possibilities of their marriages. Some of them have accepted the superficial view that they are irretrievably fixed one way or the other by the time they are forty-five. And so they cease to expect much of life. And as a matter of fact they have come to the point in life which is most of all rich in spiritual possibility.

Surely these facts suggest the possibility of a very useful service to those who learn to render it. Middle-aged men very rarely open their minds and hearts to others. But have we ever given them reason to suppose that we understand their essential problem and care about it? Certainly no mere

declaration of abstract truth in general terms is going to open for us the door into this kind of service.

#### OLD AGE

Let me add a few words about old age. I refuse to define it in terms of years. But there is a stage in life when many of those who reach it are definitely aged spirits. And about them it is possible to generalize.

These old people are very difficult for younger men and women. A great many of them live only in the past, and have practically *no* interest in the present life of the societies and congregations to which they belong. They make the young feel *very* young. They cannot talk *with* them, though they often like to talk to them. Some of them are very gracious and have beautiful spiritual attitudes. Some are very critical and censorious. These latter are apt to feel, and to show that they feel, that things are all wrong because they are different from what they were thirty or forty years ago.

The religious life of these old people is often rather attenuated. The exceptional ones live on the heights, and are truly venerable. But the majority rather lose interest in religion as their vitality lessens. Old age is *not* a period when faith is easy. Through mere weariness many old people are rather sceptical. And, of course, notoriously, there is often much that is childish about the old. They are much taken up with trifles and fuss about their

food, and their chairs, and their little arrangements. Often they are touchy and vain, and much concerned about the amount of attention they receive. Many of them are shrewd but not wise. And though numbers of them achieve a beautiful charity towards the young—so that grandparents are sometimes more understanding than parents—they do not all acquire this distinction. The men who started out on life expecting to find that the old are on the whole venerable people, have had to face some very severe shocks.

But that is not the whole story. These old men and women often get a quite disproportionate pleasure through small attentions. They like to be told things. They receive stimulus through contact with young and vigorous people. The blessed few among them who retain a sense of humour, love to hear a witty story. They are ready to become really fond in a gentle sort of way of the young who show them kindness. They do not feel *anything* very acutely, and it is useless to expect keen emotions from them. But they are capable of receiving pleasure through younger people. It is of no use at all to expect them to understand the problems which perplex their juniors, and only a very few of them can give sound advice. But their dull days can easily be brightened by any generous attention. The religion that remains to them is a very simple religion. But the younger men who have worked their own way through to the eternal simplicities of religion can bring them very real help if they will talk and pray with them very simply.

## CHAPTER III

### DOMINATED PEOPLE

THE most distressing fact about men and women is that so few of them are liberated personalities. We sense that there is some drag in their lives. They are the victims of some subtle restraint or other. That is why little annoyances produce so much anger in some. Because they have a longing for a freedom they have not yet achieved they show great resentment even at little interferences. They are not really as angry as all that over the trifles in question. They are angry at some permanent obstacle to life of which the trifle is a symbol.

Those who do not show anger often show timidity—another symptom of the same condition. They cannot live with a swing. They never let any enthusiasm master them. They generally shrink from responsibilities. They seem content to compose the padding of society, though inwardly they are not content. They may sometimes be acute in criticism, for many of them are able people, but they cannot achieve positive and creative living.

Other symptoms of their condition are recurrent moods of depression, nervous fatigues, irritability, perverseness and so on. And, of course, being in

that repressed condition they are liable to fall into secret forms of indulgence through which such people try to compensate themselves for the life they long for but cannot attain. They are partially paralysed by a sense of inferiority or general nervousness. Often they are miserably self-conscious. And their name is legion.

For all this there is some deep-seated cause. It is nearly always due to the fact that these people were repressed as children. The two men who spring to my mind as conspicuous instances in point were both sons of strong, upright, high-principled, but domineering fathers. Those fathers overbore their sons from infancy to the twenties, and by that time the damage was nearly complete. Negligent parents wrong their children very deeply, but they escape causing this particular damage. It is the parents who are much concerned, and often morally and spiritually concerned, about their children who do it. The last woman instance I have met of this trouble had a mother who never allowed her daughter to go out even in the daytime until she knew exactly where she was going and at what time she would be back. And this treatment continued until the girl was twenty-five. By that time her spirit was subdued, and almost broken. But the mother was a very highly conscientious woman.

The trouble begins with very young children. If only they would let themselves be cuddled when we want to cuddle them, and for the rest keep quiet and be good, how utterly charming they

would be! But they *will* insist on doing things—endless things—many of them messy and noisy things—some of them impossible things. And so they upset our schemes for a quiet and comfortable life. That is how antagonism first springs up between many parents and their children. The parents feel it a burden to have to be always watching, and incline to the view that their children always want to be naughty. And the children come to think of their parents as annoyingly omnipresent people who always want to interfere when they—the children—want to do things. If in that struggle the parents win, the result is the intimidated child who will grow into a man or a woman with the symptoms of repression. If the child wins, the result is a rather lawless and undisciplined human being who will find life very difficult, for the reason that some real discipline is necessary for any true life. On the whole, the rebel children make more serious mistakes in later life, and yet often achieve more real successes. They at least have learnt to be themselves and to use themselves, and when life has imposed its discipline on them they arrive at happy efficiency. They have scars to show very often. But they come to count in the world.

Of course the conflict ought to be avoided, and can be. If parents would help their children to find activities which are not “impossible,” and then leave them to carry on, if they would suggest and even sometimes co-operate, accepting their children’s suggestions, they would be leading them towards life. The golden rule is, “Give the child

room to grow, and be himself or herself." It is a very good thing even to incite the child to real adventures in living. On the whole we tend to exaggerate the extent to which we are needed. Moral instruction is essential no doubt, but the moral instruction which we can give with sincerity is incarnate in ourselves. Putting it into words is a thing which needs to be done sparingly and with great discretion. To stand back and not get in the way is supremely wise.

The period at which most damage is obviously done by the wrong kind of parent is the period of adolescence. It is then that the young person wants very much to be a person—to think for himself, experiment for himself, and decide for himself. And it is then that dominating parents try to dictate the correct views on religion, morals, politics, and social life, although it is also then that it is all important that the young should think their own thoughts. The clash at this point is often very manifest, and very painful. It is at this point that parents and teachers often show that they have forgotten what it is like to be young. It is then that the young often finally despair of the old. But it is not then that the trouble begins. It began when the children were little, and while the parents who learnt in those earlier days to co-operate with their children in work and play enter on the very great joy of co-operating with them as men and women, the others reap the trouble they have sowed.

How can such people be helped?

Sometimes it is not too late to appeal successfully



to the parents. I remember, many years ago, meeting a girl student hundreds of miles from her home, who had conceived a very eager desire to do educational work in India. But she told me it was no use, because her mother and father wanted her to come home, and just "be at home," helping to entertain callers, and delighting her parents by being charming. I don't wonder at the parents, because she could be *very* charming. But it so happened, by what men call chance, that I met that mother soon afterwards. I found that she was opposed to her daughter's plan, and that she did want to dictate to her daughter and arrange her life for her. But she also really loved her daughter, and partly through my representations, and more because of her essential good sense, she did stand aside; and that girl got to India.

In a much harder case this plan failed entirely. I knew a student who was the pitiful victim of a very domineering father, and had all the symptoms of inferiority and repression in a marked degree. He got into a state in which he could not work, could not discipline himself, and was the despair of his friends. Greatly daring, I told his father the real truth, and so far convinced him that he did try a better way. I was hopeful for a week or two. But then the father's temper broke loose one day, the old attitude was resumed, the son's fears and miseries leapt into life, and the situation was worse than ever. After that there was nothing for those two to do except separate. The boy went to the colonies, where being at last really "on his own"

he might at least have a chance. But of his later history I know nothing.

Yet I repeat it is not by any means always hopeless to appeal to parents—at least if they are still in middle life. It is very delicate work. There is no case, except that of husband and wife, where we are so apt to seem guilty of unwarrantable interference. We make matters worse if we “butt in.” But parents do sometimes turn to us for sympathy and even for advice. And so they give us our opportunity. And our chance of helping very often springs out of the fact that parents do not at all realize what they are doing. They have assumed that they *ought* to insist on their children doing what they—the parents—think right. They have not realized that they run the risk of murdering budding personalities. And when they are helped to see that they make haste to be different.

Then sometimes parents and children do so completely misunderstand each other that we can give real help by merely interpreting them to each other. I was quite a young man when a girl friend confided in me that she dearly longed to go to college, but that it was impossible, as her mother (who was a widow) would never allow her, or pay for her. Yet it was in the evening of that same day that the mother in question talked to me about her daughter and showed that she was very anxious about her. Finally she added, “What I would really like her to do, would be to go to college, but it is of no use to suggest it. I know she would not go.” There was needed in that case a very simple work of inter-

pretation to secure for that girl a college course, through which in the end she found herself.

The church as a whole has an opportunity in this matter to which it has not yet risen. It ought to be part of the received body of moral doctrine in the church that parents *must* (even though it be by prayer and fasting) attain to the grace necessary to save them from trying to dominate their children. If that doctrine were from time to time embodied in really practical and direct sermons, such sermons might have a really helpful influence in society. And all that the church might have to say on the subject could be based on the saying, "Take heed that ye offend not one of these little ones."

So much for the parents. What can we do for the repressed ones who come to us? Thank God a great deal.

1. First of all we can help them to understand themselves. They are generally unhappy. Their depressions, irritations, and fears naturally annoy them. They are perplexed, and often have a sense of sin about it all. When they are helped to see that they are the victims of a mistake made by others, they are at once relieved in mind. Their relief may be mixed with pain, because they both love and admire the parents who have so mishandled them; and to accept the view that those parents have made serious mistakes hurts the children. The very worst case of this kind I ever met—the case of a man who was almost sent permanently to the dogs by a domineering father—always insisted that his father was the very finest man he had ever met, and could

hardly accept his freedom when it became a possibility for him, because his father in the background frowned upon it. Yet I repeat that to have realized the truth of the situation is a very real help to many. It constitutes a first step towards freedom. Having both written and preached about this matter, I have had some very pathetic letters in response. An anonymous one signed "Forty-seven treated as seventeen," haunted me for years because of the pitiful story it had to tell. But that woman was really helped by having met understanding of her case. So was also another who signed herself "One of the dominated ones." Such people have assumed half-unconsciously that the church, the world, and even God were on the side of the parents. It makes a vital difference when they know the truth.

2. It also helps many to be told that it is most unseemly for them to be living on such a poor level of effort and adventure when in fact they are children of God, who made them for His glory. There is a kind of self-respect which is a plain duty, and is the only just response to the Christian facts. I have watched a sense of inferiority melting away to give place to a humble sense of being called to great things, because the person concerned had been brought to face the Christian truth about God and man.

3. A further real step will have been taken by the repressed one if he can be induced to try some new and responsible work. For, as I have said, some of these repressed people are really able people. They have great powers which for want of encouragement

they have never learnt to use. If they can only be induced to try they often discover themselves, and then almost burst their way into a new life. I once knew a secretary of an important organization who was not only very efficient but had all the necessary firmness for dealing with careless or rebellious members such as myself. But he did not look the part. He looked like one of the repressed and timid ones. And I wondered. One day he told me his story. He had been a repressed and timid person. He had been given to understand that he was no good—an all-round negligible quantity. And he had accepted that view of himself, till it had stamped itself on his face and his demeanour. But in the war he had found himself a clerk in an orderly room, and there bit by bit he was advanced till he had most responsible work to do. His seniors were promoted or killed and he was pushed on by inexorable circumstance. And to his joy he found he was quite capable. He did his work very well, and so realized that he had been mistaken about himself. Ever since then he has been a different man, and though he has not yet acquired a new appearance, he plays a man's part with a man's firm hand. In view of the very remote contingency that he may one day see this page and recognize himself, I would like to add my admiring congratulations to this outline of his history.

So I repeat that we can do a good deal for this class of persons if we can dispel their delusions about themselves, and induce them to act on a totally different conception. Sometimes I even believe we

have to encourage them to rebel. I would not like to induce children to cease to obey their parents in the Lord. But childhood stops at about sixteen and is even legally over at twenty-one, while domination goes on for many years after that point in many cases, and especially in the cases of daughters. Sometimes it never stops while the life of the domineering one lasts.

In some such cases rebellion is the only way into life for the victims. The unseemly and ridiculous situation must be ended. Often the man or the woman concerned should be encouraged to leave home. For many that step is the necessary preliminary to development, and though the parents will object, their objections have no moral weight. Of course it is often a hard thing to do. Parents plead in the name of love, and their grown-up children, in spite of all that they have suffered, still love their parents—or at least believe they ought to. But true love does not want to dominate. It wants to see the object of affection rising to his or her best. And very often after a separation has been effected a new relationship will grow up between parent and child in which there is some real affection and some real beauty.

I find I must add a word to this chapter. I can almost hear certain indignant persons who, having glanced through it, will say, "This fellow writes as if all the children were blameless martyrs, and all the parents misguided fools. Doesn't he know that children can be, and often are, self-willed, self-indulgent, lazy, pig-headed, bad-tempered, selfish,

deceitful, and utterly foolish? Doesn't he know that they often want to make fatal mistakes, from which their parents must save them at all costs? Doesn't he know that what many of these youngsters really need is less pampering and a great deal more sheer discipline?" To all that, and a great deal more which I can imagine, I would like to reply that I know all these things very well. I remember what I was like as a youngster and do not enjoy the memory at all. I do not regard even my own children as blameless saints, and again and again in conversation with young men and women I have reached with them a point at which we agreed that they—the young—had been "beastly to their parents," "rather rotters," "quite impossible," and so on.

But I do seriously believe that a new truth has been growingly perceived during the last twenty years, which calls for a new conception of parental duty. I believe it is true that the explanation of many of these characteristics of the young which we *and they* most regret is to be found in the mistakes which their parents all unwittingly made in the early days of the children. It is no part of my business to judge any man or woman. My own irretrievable mistakes are quite enough to occupy my attention in that connection. But I also believe that most parents love their children and want to avoid mistakes, for which reason the truths I have been trying to express seem to me of the first importance.

## CHAPTER IV

### FUGITIVES FROM LIFE

THERE are people who, in contrast to those last discussed, of their own choice run away from life, choosing always the safe and easy paths.

As to what started them on that path I have only one clue. I notice that they are often the youngest members of their families, or they are the only sons of widows, or only children. And that suggests that they are people who were spoilt as children. Of course it is also true that many belong to this class who are not only children, but it may be for all that that they were spoilt in life's beginning. They were, to begin with, so much shielded from life's rude shocks that they never acquired that gay indifference to shocks, and that enjoyment of danger which are such useful elements in the equipment of normal persons. They were so constantly taken care of by people who feared pain for them that they came to fear pain acutely for themselves. We all dislike going to the dentist, but these people suffer agonies beforehand over that deplorable feature of life, which far outweigh the pains they actually suffer in his chair.

They are generally rather charming people. They



are so afraid of the pain of being unpopular that they seem to learn by instinct the ways in which they can commend themselves. They have not enough courage to be rude. The more robust members of their own sex have not much use for them, but in general society they get on well. Along the safe paths of life they progress far, and they avoid the others. The term coward is much too harsh for them. In a time of real danger some of them might "play up" quite well. But they avoid the arduous and dangerous ways with half-unconscious tact.

They have nearly always an attitude to the opposite sex which is different from the normal one. Not that they are women-haters or men-haters—far from it. But they lack the capacity for robust passion, or if they have it are afraid to recognize it or give it scope. If they are men they like to be petted by women. They are attracted by their charms, enjoy the atmosphere they create, and relax in any affectionate environment. They are often witty, gay, and amusing. They are good company when things go well. But they lack that degree of masterfulness which in the end a woman expects to find in a man, and which is connected with that willingness to be leant upon which a man *must* show at times if a woman is to find a mate in him. They are afraid of passion because it introduces them into a robust and even violent world in which primitive forces are unloosed. They are very much afraid of the responsibility of being called on for support, and for that side of love are unfitted.

Really they want mothers and not wives. When they are married they can be tyrants in a rather petty way. They are to be found insisting that their homes shall be run for their convenience, and be made as safe and easy as mistaken but devoted wives and daughters can make them.

If people of this type are women, they like receiving attention. Men as protectors attract them strongly. For the lighter forms of interplay between men and women they are quite ready. They are generally exceedingly ready for marriage, because marriage seems to offer them escape from the rough open world into security and peace. They want to be the mistresses of comfortable homes for which someone else supplies the money. But they are not good lovers. They are not able to be mates for ordinary men. Because they have never been "released into life" they are not capable of playing their true parts in passion's high moments and most beautiful forms. Nor are they prepared to stand behind men, to comfort them when they are down, and to go on believing in them when they fail. In marriage at its best the parts must shift at times. But these women cannot change their role. They lean. They cannot even sometimes support. They generally crumple up when trouble comes.

Of course such people are often religious. Religion is often presented under the motto of "Safety first," and that kind of religion draws them strongly. The gentle and refined emotions which religion of that kind excites just suit them. They are to be found in all churches and all religious

societies for people of all ages. They tend to be fond of hymns about heaven. But of course it is not the Christian religion that attracts them, for the simple reason that the Christian religion is neither safe nor easy at all. For the real adventures of the narrow way they have no heart or inclination. When Christ begins to speak about carrying a cross, and being willing to lay life down, they are only frightened. "Let me to Thy bosom fly" sounds in their ears as an inspired line. But "Launch out into the deep" is a verse that only makes them shudder.

I have no wish to say or think hard things of them, for I know that their condition is not their own fault. I know that the mischief at least began in very early days before they were responsible, and I know, too, that those who realize that they are of this type often suffer acutely from that fact.

But for two reasons I long to help them. Firstly, they miss life. Real life only comes to those who take their risks. That safe and mild existence inevitably palls ere long on those who choose it, and they become dull with a deadly dullness. Our spirits only become fully alive out in the open where things happen, where the scene constantly changes, and adventures are offered to the daring. A ditch is a safe place very often, but there is no view from it. To walk the beaten paths is generally easy enough, but the grandeurs of the actual world are seen only by those who climb through rough places.

And secondly, disaster very often overtakes these safety lovers. For life's heavy responsibilities cannot

really be always avoided, and when they fall on people of this class they sometimes produce disaster. I have known a woman who was well brought up, and who seemed a normal and happy person so long as things went well. But when her husband lost his job, and life became really difficult, she went utterly to pieces. She had never begun to learn to endure. I have known several men of this type who seemed to be getting on quite well in life till they became engaged. And then as they began to realize what it is to be loved, and what enormous responsibilities that involves, they grew unhappy, and upset, and finally ran away from a kind of life that was too big for them, but in which, had they only known it, they might have found their own greater selves. I can never forget one brilliant youth for whom life had always been easy because he had great gifts, but who did actually run away from life itself when for the first time his path became difficult and unpleasant.

What can we do for these people when they come to us? We must lead them on to talk about themselves till they reveal themselves. They will quickly reveal themselves to us, and ere long they will reveal themselves to themselves. They will see what they have been doing, as they give an account of their conduct. And then they will agree to the assertion that they have been running away from life. That is a great point gained. And yet to change will not be easy for them. They took the wrong turning when they were so very young. There is a beaten track in their brains by the time they come to us.

And they must literally begin again, as though they were children. They have to practise doing things which seem to them daring things, though they may seem mere trifles to normal people. They have to learn to look in the face the risks of which they have been afraid, and go out to meet them. Some may have to dare to live alone for a while, and conquer the terrors of that condition. One man whom I knew had to brace himself to go about London in tubes and buses, because that had come to seem to him a terrible adventure, which made his nerves quiver. Another had to go to a person of whom he had allowed himself to become afraid, and clear up his relationship to that other man till it became honest. A third had to change his profession. The way into one profession had been made easy for him, and he had followed that easy path though he knew it was leading him to a life for which he was unsuited. Another still had to break an engagement into which he had fled for safety and not through love. And so on.

No doubt for some time the faltering steps which such people take in the new way of life will be very uncertain. We need to stand by with sympathy and yet not to be soft. It is bracing such people need—not coddling.

But of course in the long run we cannot stand by. To do that effectively even for one person would take nearly all our time, and ere long we would be certain to fail. There is really only one stand-by for the timid person, and that is God, in whose presence nobody need fear. One of the men whose experi-

ence lies behind this chapter, wrote to me when he was well on the way towards an effective, liberated, and happy life. He had been much helped by a psychologist towards a true understanding of himself, and had made a determined beginning in a new way of life. But the significant thing in his letter was this: "I find that I am all right so long as I maintain a disciplined devotional life, but otherwise I fall back at once."

Truly we cannot stand by. But might we not help men and women to find Him who can stand by through all time and unto eternity!

## CHAPTER V

### FEAR

A VERY large number of people in the modern world are fear-ridden. I believe it to be the chief cause of inward suffering in our day. Men and women conceal the fact with varying degrees of success in ordinary life, but when they do reveal their real condition they are discovered to be the victims of this exhausting and paralyzing emotion.

I was very painfully impressed by this fact during a recent visit to the United States. As one man put it to me, "The fear of getting out of step with American life haunts and torments thousands." Yet in Great Britain such suffering is perhaps quite as common, though it is not so frankly confessed.

No doubt the confused and bewildered state of mind so common since the war has in part produced this state of matters. When statesmen, financiers, diplomats, and big business men confess themselves to be utterly perplexed, ordinary people feel that nothing is secure. Anything, it seems, might happen; and for the plain man there seems to be no anchorage anywhere. In the general flux who can be sure that he will not be swept away without warning. Faith, which used to give our fathers

both poise and courage, is assailed on every hand. The discoveries of modern science have introduced our minds to a universe so infinitely more vast and mysterious than was formerly imagined that multitudes stand aghast. Eternities and infinities seem to surround us, while mysteries and inscrutable events are part of the content of every day. But the understanding and the vision which steadied and comforted men and women in the age of faith have vanished for millions. Except on a religious view of it life *is* terrible. Unless our fear can be transformed into a wondering reverence before a God who can be worshipped, there is no escape from it. No wonder there is hunger after God in the modern world, for without God life is apt to seem mere nightmare—a cruel game played by capriciously malign fates.

Further, we have not yet lost connection with our very remote ancestors. Animals are nervous creatures liable to panic and to stampede, and we are their descendants. Primitive man shuddered in terror before the events of nature—thunder, earthquake, tempest, and plague. The gods he half believed in were cruel powers who dealt in death and whose worship had to take the form of efforts to placate wrath. Whole tribes were liable to be frenzied by dread at times, and at such times were capable of horrible cruelties and bestialities. Our heredity links us up with such beings, and primitive man still lurks in our humanity.

The danger of war which lowers over the world to-day and threatens to end our civilization is the



direct product of fear. And fear-tormented men, now as always, are unable to reason—unable to be either wise or just—capable of stupendous follies.

Still further, many individuals have been trained to fear since their infancy. Their nervous and foolish mothers feared so much *for* them that they caught the infection and learnt to fear for themselves. They have now in adult life a deeply rooted belief that life and the world are full of dangers, and are therefore to be feared. As a result they cannot live happily, cannot adventure anything, and therefore are incapable of achievement.

When such people come to us they reveal states of mind which would be laughable if they were not all too terribly real for those who have to endure them. They fear a vast variety of things. Many fear disease, and are therefore doubly or trebly liable to it. Others fear unpopularity, and so shrivel up under criticism or become violent in reaction to it. Millions fear poverty with an almost hysterical intensity, and of these some are rich persons. One friend of mine at one period feared heights till he could hardly compel his legs to take him upstairs. I have known others who feared cats, or dogs, or hens, or cows, or open spaces, or closed spaces, or trains, or men, or women, or fire, or burglars. Numbers fear fantastic things, such as the possibility of being found in the streets dressed in a bath-towel. Millions fear life in general, and yet the same millions fear death. Still more millions fear "they know not what." They are just afraid, and to that extent miserable and ineffective.

Some of these people do not realize that it is fear which is undoing them. Many, on the other hand, do realize that and so despise themselves. But self-contempt does not bring relief.

How are such people to be helped? Of course the psychologists have their own methods and are doing invaluable work for multitudes. But what are we ordinary people to do about it? How can we render help?

I have failed so often that I ought to speak with diffidence, and yet I do believe that I know the way in which fear can be conquered. Indeed I believe I know the only way in which it can be finally and permanently subdued. It is not a simple process, for it involves helping the sufferers to a completely new view of life and the world and pain and death, and above all of God.

"The great problem before civilization," says Valentine in *Modern Psychology*, "is the sublimation of fear, and the only sufficient sublimation is in religious reverence and awe."<sup>1</sup> Put differently, on a religious view of it life is not terrible, neither is the world, nor is death. If a loving God is the ultimate fact, then the world which is of His making may be discovered to be a friendly home. Life may be a companionship with that God. Bodily and mental pains may turn into occasions for seeking and receiving His help. Death may be envisaged as a mere incident separating one kind of fellowship with Him from another. We may stand

<sup>1</sup> p. 168.

in awe before the whole universe because on such a conception it is sublime and the immensities involved in it may make us feel the most helpless of atoms. But if love be the final fact of the universe awe will not develop into fear, and we may feel free to go in and out in life, and here and there in the world, as before a Father's face. I remember once asking a godly man whether he would care to live his life over again, and I got this surprising answer: "Yes, and especially the parts of it which involved suffering, because it was through those parts that I came to know most of God." Many others have since confirmed that view.

It is just here that one of the strongest reasons for the practice of public worship presents itself. In corporate worship the individual is presented with a conception of God which on the one hand does produce awe, but which also leads to a sense of peace and security. Further, while it is our liability to be swept away by herd emotions which lays us open to be humiliated by corporate panic, once we have found that the herd emotion may carry us along to profound reverence, we have learnt how to deal with this dangerous element in our humanity. We *may* drag one another down into the hell of dread and terror. But we may also rise together into the very presence of God, where no fear is.

In particular, I have come to believe that a great many people will never escape from the dominion of fear until they have dealt deliberately both with the fear of death and the fear of pain. Let us

think of death first. Plainly behind a great many of the ordinary alarms of people lies the fact that they regard with horror the risk of losing their lives. Unconsciously they assume that to be the great and final calamity. Therefore they are nervous in trains and motors and sailing-boats—in thunderstorms, and when infectious disease is about—when they are ill (especially if they are men) and when mobs threaten to become violent.

But if death is *not* the great calamity, then all these fears are cut at the root. What a great many people need to do is to sit down and face the fact that if they do die they will only be nearer than ever to a Father's love. Being, as they often are, nominal Christians, they have given assent to that view. But they have never really made it theirs. When they have done so they find that fear is gone. "What time I am afraid I will trust in the Lord." "Perfect love—the love of God—casteth out fear."

I have never found it a simple or easy thing to lead anyone else into a firm and constant faith in the love of God. But I have watched people grow into that faith, and therewith grow also into serenity and new energy, and the joy that is quiet but lasting.

Pain is another matter. The significant thing about it is that people who fear pain intensely often bear it bravely. They are very much afraid that they might play the coward if it came, and yet in the day of trial they play the man. Even when they suffer acutely they do not break down. And

the fact is that pain is a thing with which a man may, as it were, make friends, once he and pain have met face to face. It looks terrible seen through long-distance glasses. It often looks unspeakably horrible in the lives of those we love. But when actually handled it is *not* so terrible. It may not hurt less than we expected, but it proves not such a terrible thing to be hurt as much as we expected. And in particular those who have learnt to face each hour as it comes in the strength and with the help of God discover that He can carry them through hours of pain. And from that discovery we may pass on to a state of mind in which we can say that we know no ultimately evil thing can befall us in time or eternity, here or anywhere else.

Even as I write these things I feel that there is something cold and unsympathetic in this theoretical dismissal of pain, when as a matter of fact it torments and tortures thousands of dear and innocent people. If we were to allow these thoughts to make us immune to the appeal of suffering they would indeed be devil's thoughts. On any true view of it, suffering in others is a thing which ought to produce suffering in us, for it always produces suffering in God. He is open to suffering just because His name is Love, and none who share any sense of His love can ever escape a share also of His suffering. But love that suffers is also love that never faileth. It never gives in. It is never overcome. And to help people towards that faith *is* the only way to help them when they are assailed by fear of pain. The remedy for these things lies in

the realm of the spirit. In no other way can we become conquerors.

Our fathers who lived with such quiet and unshaken dignity amidst the sorrows and confusions of the world, and who even rose again and again into real joy, did so because their lives were rooted in God, and they believed that "neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God."

We prove of help to the prisoners of fear only in so far as we help them to share that faith.

## CHAPTER VI

### DRYNESS

A VERY common trouble among religiously minded people is a sense that their religion is threatening to fade away. I have said something about this as a common experience in the period of life between eighteen and twenty-five. But it is by no means confined to that period. All the literature of personal religion is full of references to this state, from the Psalms onwards. In the histories of faithful monks and nuns it seems to have occurred with such frequency as to suggest that it is inevitable. But it is hardly less common among the people who try to live a religious life in the open world.

Those suffering from this malady declare that all warmth of feeling about God, and all generous enthusiasm for the service of God or man, has left them. As a rule they say that they have not lost belief, but that their belief has become a cold thing. They cannot pray. They cannot speak helpfully or naturally to others about religion. If they continue to attend church, they confess to finding there chiefly disappointment. Some at such periods become intensely critical of services, hymns, sermons, parsons, and the church generally. Others merely

feel with dismay that something very beautiful which they used to possess is slipping from them. They cannot respond to the eager talk of others about religion, and are often annoyed by it. They suffer in varying degrees. Some go down into black depths of depression, and enter on the "dark night of the soul." Others carry on with some superficial interest in things, but would agree with a friend of mine who once declared to me, "Inside me there is nothing." And when religion fades very often life as a whole seems to lose its meaning. "What is it all for? Why do we do the things we do?" Such are the questions they ask. And, of course, at the end of that road cynicism and despair await us. If there is a way of helping such people I would say, "In God's name let us learn it." For this is not only one of the main causes of the church's weakness, it is also the cause of life-long pitiful suffering, and great waste of life. Because of it thousands are out of their true life.

There are a great many things to be said about this condition, for it is not really one disease. The causes of it are manifold. I find I have no less than eight preliminary things to say about it before I get to the heart of the matter.

1. Sometimes the real truth is that people in this condition have allowed their bodies to get out of order. They are taking too little exercise, and living too much in bad air. Or they are eating too much, or perhaps too little. Or they are sleeping too little, etc., etc. And the truth about them is that they need the sound advice of a doctor more



than that of any minister. It is not new spiritual experiences they need, or new truths of a religious kind, but cleaner blood in their veins, and sounder nerves, and better digestion, and more regular and wholesome bodily habits.

2. Sometimes people in the condition of dryness are really only slowly recovering from some severe blow. They have had to face a shattering bereavement, or the fiery trials of unreturned love, or desertion by someone very dear, or some other experience of cruelty and injustice. And just as a part of the body which has been seriously wounded will remain numb and insensitive for some time, so the very souls of men and women will at times become numb, and so unable to respond to any stimulus, however real. And when that is the truth about people there is nothing for them to do but give themselves time to recover, and so far as is possible refrain from worrying. We can help them to refrain from worrying if we display a convinced faith that they *will* recover.

3. Some of the people who are in a state of religious reaction are merely having experience of the inevitable ups and downs of life. It would be a very good thing for us all if we would clearly recognize this feature of our incarnate life. On the merely physical level energy comes and goes with all of us, for reasons which seem to us obscure. We only know that sometimes we feel for no particular reason on the top of life, and at others very much under its heel. Ere long most of us learn not to worry about that matter, for we discover that though

to-day we may be down, to-morrow or at least ere long, we shall certainly be up. The same thing is most obviously, and I fancy most disconcertingly true in the experience of artists, and indeed of all who try to do creative work—including writing. (All ministers know a painful lot about this.) The same is true of our romantic life. Even the very finest lovers cannot always be at their best. Even the most beautiful love affairs must submit to some rhythmic ebb and flow. And wise lovers learn to expect this, and to be patient when the ebb is in process.

And so I come to our religious life. No saint was ever constantly on the spiritual heights. A passage in Bunyan comes to my mind here. Having told us of his deliverance from a great temptation, he goes on, "I had two or three times at or about my deliverance such strange apprehensions of the grace of God, that I could hardly bear up under it: it was so out of measure amazing, when I thought it could reach to me, that I do think if a sense of it had abode long upon me, it would have made me incapable for business." But Bunyan had to go on with his business, and the temperature of his religious life had to fall to normal again. I suspect it often, even after all that, fell to below normal. So it is and must be with us all. It may be that in the end we shall attain to some constant and serene enjoyment of God in and through all life's affairs. It is certain that in the process we must often go up and down, and I have often wished that I might be allowed to warn those who have had any vivid experience to

prepare for the reaction which is sure to follow. We all have to come down from the heights and learn to live in a workaday world by the help of disciplined habits which we have to continue even through moods of depression and periods of great disappointment. Surely, too, it would be well to realize that the companionship of God is not necessarily an emotional matter. We assume God is not with us because we are not feeling in any intense way. The assumption is entirely unjustified. God may all the time be giving us energy for dogged effort and courage for prolonged endurance. He may be most truly saving us. We have no right to expect continuous delight in Him.

4. Sometimes the people who express themselves as disappointed with their religion are really only discovering the inadequacy of the religion they have known up to date. This is a common case. I have known people who have tried to get through life with a religion that came to them during their adolescence. And the thing cannot be done. Adolescent religion is impossible to men and women in middle life. Unless we go on to learn a great deal more about religion, and indeed unless we are willing to unlearn a good deal, we inevitably fail. The process may be painful and laborious. But then real religion does involve both pain and labour. In particular those who find they must give up views which they had formerly held are apt to suffer great distress in the process. But the pains of such processes are growing pains. Really there is cause for thankfulness when men and

women become distressed and upset because they have opened their minds and have to go through a process of mental readjustment. It means that they are growing up. It is that truth which lies behind the saying which I have heard more than once about some rather complacent Christian: "What that man really needs if he is to get on is a good strong dose of doubt." And when the doubts come there really is an opportunity for a sympathetic and intelligent friend to be of real use.

5. Sometimes what is really happening to souls in dryness is that they are discovering that they are in the wrong church, and have been trying to live by the help of devotional methods which are unsuitable for them. The common saying that a man *ought* to remain in the church in which he was brought up seems to me to reveal a singular blindness to the varying needs of different souls in the matter of religion. In one of my churches there was a young man who was a natural born Quaker. The result was that inevitably he found Presbyterian methods of worship unhelpful, and I begged him earnestly to go to his natural spiritual home. Another member of one of my congregations was so made that she was only really joyously aware of God when she was able to use the help of sacramental services. I was glad for every reason when she "changed her church." And on the other hand I have welcomed into my congregations both men and women from other very different churches who told me that they never were at home in church or got any real help from it until they

found our special kind of church order and spiritual tradition. We ministers would do better service to people if we were willing to try to help them in finding their true spiritual homes.

6. In the sixth place it is well to remember that in middle life there comes a sort of pause in our life history. That is the fact that produces talk about "the difficult forties." They *are* difficult, and that for the reason that round about that point in life the first portion of natural energy granted to us seems to have spent itself. The forms of work and play that used to stimulate and delight us begin to leave us cold. We have no more the kind of energy needed to enjoy the experiences and the pleasures which are normal for men and women till they reach that stage.

This does not really mean that the best of life is over. It is much more true that "the best is yet to be." But it does mean that we have to achieve a pretty profound readjustment in life, and among the various readjustments needed, a spiritual readjustment is most necessary of all. I sometimes think that unless people make a new beginning in religion about that period they are very likely to lose all real religion, and I am strengthened in that view by watching the pitiful and merely formal kind of religion which remains to those who have made no readjustment. I already said more on this point in Chapter II.

7. Many people who complain that their religion is beginning to fade have nothing real to complain about because in plain truth they have been doing

nothing to keep their religion alive, and give it a chance to grow. Really a great many people seem to have assumed that their religion will get on all right under a course of studious neglect. They do not think about it. They do not study the teaching of any of the great teachers of religion. They do not submit themselves to the discipline of learning to pray. They once had a very real religious impression, but having got it they have taken no pains to keep what they had got. And this course of action only needs to be looked at for its folly to appear. I have had men and women in my room with me who told about themselves some such story as that, and even as they told it they saw for themselves the utter folly of it. And having seen clearly the reason for their poor estate they went away to change it. Sometimes the results have been rapid and wonderful.

8. And lastly among these preliminary considerations I record the fact that the religion of some people fades simply and solely because they give it no real expression in action.

I thank God for the people who are teaching us once again to-day that there is no real way to learn truth except the way of action. We cannot become possessed of truth merely by thought apart from conduct. We discover by adventure in the real world. And so the reason why religion fades is often because there is no element of practical adventure in our lives. I do not merely mean that we are not trying to "do Christian work" as it is called. We may be involved in various forms of activity organized by the

church. But for all that it may be true that we are doing nothing on the assumption that God will work through us, and daring nothing in expectation of His practical and effective help. We do things just as anybody might do them. We do not do things which would be ridiculous and impossible unless there was a God. And so we do not make new discoveries of God, and our religion fades, even though we study the Bible and make a practice of saying our prayers. God does not disappoint those who make adventures in reliance on Him. But He remains unknown to those who live on the assumption that only what are called natural resources are available for us.

I think all these preliminaries are very important. They are all real explanations of forms of religious dryness which are common. But I call them preliminaries because the most serious and the commonest cause of that condition has still to be dealt with. Often the real reason for it consists in something that is quite definitely wrong in the life of the sufferers. In some respect they are not being quite honest with themselves or with God, and are retaining in their lives some element which they cannot ask God to bless. And if that be so dryness will certainly result.

The fact is that many of us want to have a religion and to enjoy its inspirations and comforts, but we do *not* want to be so thorough with it as to submit the whole of our lives to God's control. We have beliefs, and we maintain certain religious practices. We take our stand on the side of religion. But

secretly we assent to the assertion, "Religion is a good thing if you take care not to have too much of it." We would rather dislike the reputation of being very religious persons, and we shrink from the suggestion that we should face everything in our lives in the light of God and allow Him constant control.

But life pronounces a final verdict on that plan. Those who would fain go half of the way or two-thirds of the way towards the religious life, and then stop there, inexorably awaken to the fact, if they are honest, that their religion is not worth having and that their souls are dry. Along that line no man attains to the liberation, the adjustment, the serenity and the poise which are the good things which God has in store for us.

Of course the reason why we shrink in some measure from God is that we have a wrong idea of God. If we had learnt that God is in all life that is true and vigorous and brave—if we had come to realize His presence in all beauty, and had learnt that He is there whenever love is there—if we had detected the presence of God in all the simple humanities of life—if we had come to understand that the fellowship of God can be continued through work that is true and through play that is sincere, and through all artistic and intellectual activities, as well as through all wholesome recreations—if, in fact, we had come to believe in Christ's God, we should not shrink from any closeness of contact with Him. And we should know that if ever we *did* become *very* religious it would only mean that we



would be more ready with sympathy for others, more able to see their faults with charity, and more able to maintain a happy and a hopeful attitude of spirit whatever happens. The *really* religious people leave warmth behind them wherever they go.

But few have got there yet. And so we retain in our lives elements which we feel cannot be exposed to God—elements which constitute a reserve towards Him, and inevitably the influence of that reserve spreads over our whole lives and our souls go dry.

Here are some of the things which I have found “dry souls” were retaining in their lives to their own undoing.

1. A wrong relationship to some other human being, and very often to some other member of their families. It is amazing for what a long time quite good people will go on before trying humbly and sincerely to attain reconciliation with a brother or sister or a wife or a husband, etc.

2. A wrong bodily habit. And generally those who retain it argue that it is not wrong, or that it is natural, or very common, etc. And yet all the time they know that it is an element in their lives about which they cannot talk to God, so that it separates them from Him.

3. A wrong attitude towards money—either a grasping one or a careless one. I have found that thrift very easily develops into avarice, and an honest carefulness about money into covetousness, and so people who began well become after all

prisoners of Mammon. And over them I know that Christ weeps.

4. A refusal to forgive someone who has indeed offended. Those in this class dwell in thought upon the enormity of the offence committed against them until they become "righteously indignant," and make a virtue of their resentment. Yet all that does not change by one whit the truth of His saying that if we do not forgive one another we cannot be forgiven. Nobody ever enjoyed a sincere and happy sense of God's nearness who was remaining unreconciled to another human being. Just as our whole spiritual life as a nation was sterilized during the unhappy years when we hated Germans, so great numbers of individual lives are still being sterilized to-day by a failure to learn to forgive.

5. Akin to this is the deadly mistake of retaining a dislike, which may even at times amount to a hatred. And what misleads us here is that people *do* do hateful and abominable things, which no one possessed of a moral sense can regard with anything but repulsion. But God loves sinners, even gross ones. And He loves them while they are yet sinners. We may not in this life ever attain to that—for it is very high. But if we are not trying—if we have not even got so far as to pray that we may become able to surrender our dislike, and may learn to love, then that attitude must necessarily separate us from the God who loves all—even the very worst and the horribly bad.

6. I have known a soul "go dry" because of an ambition fiercely clutched. He was a very promis-

ing man. I thought his character was a good one in the making, and I believe his religion to have been at one point very real. But it faded. To-day I cannot see it as anything better than a withered plant. The life may be still in it. I do not know. But what caused the blight was that a professional ambition came to take first place in his life, and for God there was only a second place. His professional ambition was connected with the love of power, and I fear in part with the love of the many luxurious things which money can buy. And there are many men and many women in his regiment.

7. Then I have found this spiritual sickness to be due to a variety of emotions, such as fear, or worry, or jealousy, or pride, or resentment against the world, or self-pity, etc. And all of these, or any one of these, will have the effect of weakening the sense of God's reality. And yet it is also true that any one of these suggests a road along which the sense of God's reality might be most wonderfully recovered. For once any man has faced the real facts about his condition and is prepared to throw himself on God, that by the help of God he may escape from that condition, he is at the very door of a great new experience of God.

As an illustration under No. 1 I insert the following instance:

A man whose very name I have forgotten came to me because he was suffering from "dryness." Yet he knew what he believed and was not troubled by doubt. He was living a fine and clean life. He was unselfish and active. And so for an hour while

we walked in the dark he explored his life with me. And in the end he found the root of his trouble. He was on bad terms with his only sister because he disapproved of the way in which she treated their mother, and he had never been frank with her about the matter so that they might get over their estrangement. And that had caused all the trouble. With that man diagnosis led immediately to cure. Once he understood himself he was ready to act. I believe that this would generally be found to be the case.

Let me add a special word to ministers about this. We all find that the real difficulty is to get people to face themselves. They shrink from the process in which patient and helper conduct a joint investigation into the life of the patient. Obviously we cannot force it on them. And we ought not to try. Obtrusive and inquisitive methods revolt me, and they are to-day employed by some people. I believe they often do a great deal of harm. But when sufferers from dryness come to us and are really eager to be helped, they are often also ready to face all the facts about their lives if only we can be sensitive and tender enough. They may at first be afraid of complete frankness. Perhaps for a time they are really testing us. They may try for a time to deceive both themselves and us. Some of them move only slowly. Many for a while will want to argue that what they know in their hearts to be wrong is not really wrong. The ramparts of their false self-respect crumble only gradually.

But when at last the truth is out, the cure is also at hand. God waits. And for fear or worry or

pride or greed or jealousy or any other kind of mistaken way of life God is a sufficient helper.

May I also in humility and charity add another word. It is at least sometimes the case that ministers themselves are not "delivered" souls. Some of them are suffering from acute dryness. Some of them are self-conscious, or ambitious, or touchy, or domineering. All of which things mean that God is not being allowed His way with them. They are not really surrendered souls. And people will sense that fact, and feel that to such men they could not open their hearts. And so such men miss the greatest opportunities of their calling. I make no sweeping assertions about ministers in general. I do not know the facts about ministers in general. But I have been allowed to know the truth about some, and therefore I urge this matter on the attention of those who have a sense of failure in their calling.

## CHAPTER VII

### THIS INFERIORITY BUSINESS

I HAVE a word to say about the people who suffer from a sense of inferiority. I do not mean the people who have an inferiority complex. That, I understand, is something hidden away in their unconscious regions, and its effect is to make them self-assertive, dogmatic, overbearing, and generally objectionable. But I am concerned with the people who consciously suffer from a sense of inferiority which in varying degrees paralyses their activities, makes them terribly nervous about doing things, and in general is a horrible scourge to those who suffer from it.

The existence of this sense of inferiority in people has curiously little connection with the facts as to their abilities. Some quite stupid people are entirely free from it, and many able people display it in a marked degree. It affects men and women who have had very able parents, or older brothers and sisters with marked individualities. It is sure, or almost sure, to crop up in people who have been bullied. Children whose parents were not able at all, but who treated their sons and daughters with contempt, are almost sure to suffer from it. People

who have always been poor in the money sense terribly often have this extra affliction laid upon them. Women from homes in which a Victorian tradition about women held sway are hard put to it to escape a most humiliating sense of inferiority. Men who were delicate as schoolboys, and therefore rather unsuccessful in school life, often carry this burden through the rest of their days. Sensitive spirits who have had to live in rough places have the same handicap. Those whose early efforts in any line of activity were laughed at or despised may acquire this distressing characteristic. Some people seem to have it by heredity. Of course strong, robust, and vigorous personalities escape it whatever their circumstances, and however much rough people try to suppress them. But we cannot all have robust personalities, and this annoying sense is terribly common.

It has very serious and horribly painful consequences. Some people because of it suffer agonies of nervousness whenever they have to do anything out of the ordinary, and in the public eye. With many it paralyses their whole natures, and restrains them from all creative effort. It humiliates its victims, and takes the joy out of life. It has robbed society of incalculable values, for many of those who thus suffer have really great abilities. It creates a sense of frustration and of being unfulfilled in life. Sometimes it creates actual misery.

I believe that sometimes it can be argued out of people. They can be told that they really *have* got abilities, and that they *ought* to rouse themselves and make their true contribution to the life of the world.

And if they can be induced to make a few efforts, even though they cost pain, they may discover that they really can "do things," and in the joy of that discovery they make their escape complete. All teachers, and all who manage institutions and societies know that they often have the chance to persuade some shy person to a real new effort, and that sometimes such people seem to be transformed in a few weeks.

But I believe that the great way of escape for such people lies in accepting that view of themselves which Christ taught, and which is a central part of our religion. To the individual, Christ always says, "You are a child of God. You were created for His glory. He waits to fulfil Himself in part through you, and is willing to work through you." Now those who really believe that, and do not merely give it a passing assent, as we do to so many Christian truths—those I repeat who really believe that, are forced at once to a new conception of themselves. When they realize that they have value for God a new self-respect grows up in them. If God values them it *must* be wrong for them to depreciate themselves. This new self-respect is not pride. It is not an emotion rooted in themselves. It is the result of believing in God. I believe that Jesus may truly be said to have been an entirely humble person. Yet He made such claims for Himself as take one's breath away. And the explanation of that, which He Himself most clearly gave us, was that He always spoke and acted with the clear sense that in His activities He was merely the spokesman and the



agent of God Himself. As God's mouthpiece He would make very great claims. In Himself He was meek and lowly.

Here again His way is the only true way of life. It is by accepting the truth on which Christ daily lived that we may leave behind us all hampering sense of inferiority. If God commissions us we *must* act resolutely. And if God will support and guide us there is really nothing of which we need be afraid.

Probably most of us who have passed middle life and have watched religion as it actually works among men and women have had our breath taken away as we have seen some young man or some young woman almost suddenly emerge into new activity and accept immense responsibilities. We may even have felt that such young people were forgetting themselves, and we may have criticized some of their new resoluteness. I am sure we should beware of doing anything of that sort. It may be true that with the new courage and firmness in action which God gives there may be an intermixture of what we call "uppishness" just at first. The young in years are notoriously apt to be pushing and over-confident. So are those who are young in faith. But with those who are really in contact with God that condition will pass. God makes people brave, but He also makes them humble. He lays on them great tasks and often under His guidance they do great things. But at the same time they learn that they themselves, apart from God, are nothing.

I once knew a man who was endowed with such outstanding natural abilities that he made most other men seem small. He was by temperament arrogant. As he came from a very humble home, he was also, unknown to himself, a little inclined to compensate for a slight sense of inferiority over against society in general, by being stridently self-assertive. He could and did say at times such incisive, true, but cutting things that his words were cruel in their effects. But he was at heart a real follower of Christ. It was his custom to kneel daily before God in new self-surrender. And in his later years a certain very beautiful humility became manifest in him. He learnt to be gracious and kindly.

That was an example on a great scale of what may happen to anybody. A new stature is given to those who learn to lean on God. They escape from their sense of inferiority and have a trembling joy in the fact that they are living under God's influence and in the possession of God's love. In the end of the day that knowledge cleanses them both from timidity and from any apparent conceit that for a time may seem to beset them.

But I know of no other way in which this adjustment may be achieved. Those who merely escape from a sense of inferiority by self-assertion become the end unlovely characters. It is in the atmosphere of God, and in that atmosphere only, that we attain a real fullness of life which is not marred by anything. Truly "in Him standeth our true life."

## CHAPTER VIII

### FANCIES, LIES, AND DELUSIONS

THE idea that people who say what is not true are always liars gets completely dispersed as we get to know real men and women. The number of untrue things said to us by people who really believe that they are speaking the truth is enormous. It is one of the first things we have to learn, not to take at its face value much that is said to us, and yet not to think hardly of the speakers. There seem to be no limits to the power of unconscious self-deception.

Most people are frankly determined not to accept a view of themselves which would be humiliating, and therefore are sure that the explanation of the difficult situations in which they find themselves *must* be something other than the obvious one, viz. that they are selfish, or irritable, or jealous, or stupid, or bad-tempered.

In connection with quarrels and misunderstandings I have again and again listened to statements of the case from each side in turn. Always the first speaker has made out a case which seemed unanswerable, and put the other party in a most unfavourable light. But always the second speaker has produced exactly the opposite impression.

Always both have believed they were telling the truth. Obviously neither was telling the whole truth. And quite certainly neither knew the whole truth. A great many men, and I think still more women, are working in life with a conception of themselves which is incorrect. And they cling to that conception in spite of inward qualms at times, because to surrender it would mean humiliation. They insist on believing that they are people of a certain kind and quality, and if their conduct does not actually conform to that conception then somebody else must be found to bear the blame. And if I seem to be prejudiced in saying that this is more often true of women than of men, I hasten to add that I attribute that fact to the other fact that men are much more capable of saying about something that they have done in a quite brazen way, "Yes, it was wrong, and I did it, and in the same circumstances I would do it again," whereas women must argue themselves into a belief that a thing is not wrong before they can do it, and they deal in the same way with their past actions. They are far more sensitive to a view of themselves which would make them out unchristian or immoral, and therefore become adepts at creating an unreal world for themselves in which they can maintain an unreal view of themselves.

The commonest of all these methods of evasion is to blame somebody else. The conduct of the other people in any situation has seldom been perfect, and by concentrating their attention on the wickedness or stupidity of those other people many

persons escape attending to their own mistakes and follies.

And they do not wish to be mean or deceitful. Indeed, they do not know that they are. Troublesome adolescents often give most lurid accounts of the conduct of their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc., etc., and the seniors in question give equally highly coloured accounts of the ways and manners of the adolescents. Both sides are wrong, and neither knows what it does.

I doubt whether any husband has ever seen the whole truth about himself in relation to a wife with whom he is not getting on well. Nor are wives any better. The members of the staff of a school give one account of the whole institution, including the head of it, and the head gives quite another. When a "row in the choir" breaks out, as it is apt to do with persistent irregularity, the stories told about it by the various members concerned are no more compatible with each other than are the accounts of the nation's condition given by different schools of politicians. And none of the people concerned are consciously dishonest. They are only blind where it suits them to be blind. My heart was once greatly moved by the pitiful account given of her pathetic state by a woman whose husband drank. And I continued to be greatly moved by the matter till I visited her house, and saw for myself how she treated her husband. After that I felt convinced that I also would take to drink if I had to live with her. At the other end of the social scale I knew a refined and intelligent man of a

religious type who complained, with a restraint that greatly strengthened his case, that his wife gave him no sympathy, and that he was lonely in his own home. It was an appealing story. But I found in time that he was also that terrible thing, a pious, unyielding, and dogmatic autocrat with whom no woman could be happy. Several men have told me stories of how they had been misunderstood, unjustly treated, and even bullied in one business situation after another. And they really believed what they said. They were very sorry for themselves. But so also were the firms concerned, till they had got rid of them, for the truth was that these men were incompetent, self-important, and impossible to work with.

I once wasted an amount of emotion which I shudder to recall over a woman who had a pitiful story to tell of how life had tossed her about, and man after man had let her down. And then I discovered it was her favourite hobby to enjoy the contemplation of herself as a persecuted heroine and that in plain fact she could not love, and was wholly self-centred. Often as I have listened to such people I have been reminded of the woman at the well of Samaria. She presented herself as a person who wanted to discuss theology—whose difficulties were intellectual. And Jesus, who saw the truth about people, had to give the conversation a dramatic turn by asking her about her husband, and compelling her to face the fact that her difficulties were moral.

Now what of all these people who deceive them-

selves? What can be done for them? Blunt criticism is worse than useless. They resent it, hold it unjust, and use it to strengthen their case that they are persecuted and greatly to be pitied sufferers. If we had to decide how much of what they say is true we might well despair. For judges who have to sift their words and weigh their evidence in the scales I have sincere sympathy. Fortunately it is not our business to judge any man. Merit and demerit we cannot weigh. Our real business is with these people one by one. They are persons in a sad condition who need to be healed. And they must be brought to face the truth. Nothing but the truth can save them. Nothing but a new view of themselves will usher in a new kind of life for them. We have to be very clear about this. What these people need is *not* to learn new devotional methods, or new religious truths. It does not meet their case to urge them to new forms of service. Books will not help their particular case. They are the victims of delusions. They are encased in a false view of themselves. They use that false view as a protective armour over against both God and man. They are out of touch with reality, and though religious and moral emotions be stimulated in them they remain out of touch with reality until they have been brought to face the truth. Though it humiliates them, and at first seems almost to break them, it is the only way to life. I think that Jesus must have meant this when He said, "The truth shall make you free." Therefore we must address ourselves to the task of

helping them to see the truth, and the one way in which that can be done is the way of friendship. There is always much in them to make friendship possible. I have spoken of their unfortunate condition, but in spite of it most of them are in other respects admirable and lovable. And when they know that they are appreciated they become approachable. It may take time, but till an atmosphere of friendship and trust has been created nothing can be done. When it has been created these people cease to be on the defensive. In the absence of expressed criticism they will begin to see and admit that they have been foolish and difficult, etc. In the presence of one in whose friendship they have reason to believe they soften, and then they will listen to the truth if it is uttered as from one sinner to another. And so a new conception of themselves and a truer one will begin to form itself in their minds. They begin to feel humbled, and in that blessed state all good things become possible to them. With a new vision of themselves there will come a new vision of their husbands or wives or their fellow workers, and with that new vision they may attain to new relations of a new and happier kind.

A talk with one of these people is always in danger of becoming a discussion or even a debate about his view of himself versus our view of him. I have always found that entirely useless. But if I can induce my friend to come with me into the presence of Jesus that he and I may face the thought of Jesus about us, then there is infinite hope. The



man concerned must reach for himself a new view of his character and conduct. When he has described what he has done, the question most worth putting to him is: "And what do you think that Christ would say about it?" If he will face that question, he will cease to feel that he is meeting unkind criticism from us. And still further, if he can be brought to believe that the way is open to him into a new life—that Christ can make a new man of him, he will be willing to admit all the sad truth. Many people defend themselves *as they are* because secretly they believe that that is all they ever can be. When new possibilities are opened out to them they will stop being on the defensive.

And so again I arrive at the fact that unless we know a secret of new life which we can and will share with others, we cannot really and permanently help these sufferers or any other people who are missing life.

## PART II

# OF SEX LIFE AND SOME OF ITS PROBLEMS

### CHAPTER IX

#### THE MYSTERIES, BEAUTIES, AND PERPLEXITIES OF SEX

I FIND that a great many godly people believe that problems, perplexities, and sufferings connected with the fact of sex are exceptional among the decent people whom they know, and that therefore they need not be concerned about them. Some betray a sense that such troubles are objectionable, and that therefore they would much rather neglect them.

It was with that outlook that I began my ministry. I still confidently believe that a very large number of men and women pass through life without any serious troubles due to this cause. I would even like to think that they constitute a majority, though I doubt it.

On the other hand I now know that very many men and women are seriously troubled and have sufferings in connection with sex, and as I gain that knowledge I see clearly that unless pastors, teachers, and ministers take care to become sensitive, understanding, and informed about the

whole matter they will fail in what might be a very important and very helpful part of their work. When I speak of troubles in connection with sex, I do not imply for a moment that in most of them there is any base or gross element at all. Many of them are troubles caused by the instinct of love, and are due to the fact that unfulfilled love imposes on us some of the heaviest crosses we are ever called on to carry. There is nothing base in being conscious of sex starvation. It is inevitable for a large percentage of human beings constituted as we are, if they have not been blessed by a happy marriage. When manhood or womanhood remain in any deep sense unfulfilled, of course there is suffering. Yet in relation to the sufferings of love and sex the help that can be rendered by understanding sympathy is very great. Indeed I am inclined to think that there is no realm of life in which expensive sympathy can accomplish so much.

For those who would help in this connection, the first and most obvious necessity is that they themselves become rightly adjusted to sex. By that I mean simply that we must take a completely Christian view of it, accepting it as a very important part of the divine plan for human life, and realizing how capable it is, when truly handled, of adding to the beauty, warmth, colour, and joy of life. Sex is a matter in connection with which the body and its functions may be brought into such real harmony with the spirit, that we reach along that road a unified and liberated life.

So long as we think there is inevitably something

“ low ” in sex we are not adjusted. So long as we ourselves are half afraid of it, or half embarrassed by it, or half ashamed of it, we are not adjusted. Needless to say, so long as we retain any furtive or salacious attitude to it we are not adjusted. And if we are not adjusted ourselves we cannot help others.

If men and women are to get help from confiding in us in this connection we *must* be people who are never shocked, never merely censorious, never embarrassed, and never prurient, but who on the other hand can face the troubles and the perplexities of sex life with that detached and quiet manner which we associate with the best doctors.

For the most part people do *not* confide in teachers or doctors or ministers because they believe they are sure to be very censorious in this connection, and quite unsympathetically disposed towards the real strains and sorrows and worries of real people. And so the needy souls go unhelped. It is a pity.

To begin with, the question of our own knowledge is very important. If we are men we probably know a little about boys and a little about men, but nothing at all about girls and women. With women teachers and leaders the situation is reversed. With that equipment we cannot minister to souls that here are incarnated in bodies.

I have never found it necessary to read books which deal with the perversions of sex, and I propose to remain in ignorance about them. But I am quite clear that *every* would-be helper of others needs to know the truth about the normal sex experiences of

men and women, and also about their temptations, their common mistakes, their unsuccessful experiments, their mental confusions, curiosities, sufferings, and perplexities. Those who come to us must be able to feel at a fairly early point in the conversation, "I see this man or this woman understands what I want to talk about." That feeling alone will make confidence easy and will bring great relief.

This means that I do not think we need to read the whole of Havelock Ellis, though he would do none of us any harm. But we do need to read such books as *The Mastery of Sex through Psychology and Religion* by Leslie Weatherhead, and *What is Sex?* by Dr. Helena Wright, and *Sex and Common Sense* by Dr. Maude Royden, etc.

Beyond this it is greatly to be desired that men should have at least a few talks with clear-headed, non-sentimental, informed, and sensible women—preferably married women. I believe I know more about sex than most men, and I have found that such knowledge as I do possess has been constantly of use in helping others. I owe my knowledge to four sources—firstly to my wife, to whom God gave a great gift of common sense, secondly to books, thirdly to the talk of doctors, especially the doctors who understand psychology, and fourthly and very largely to the conversations I have had with wise and large-minded married women. A man can probably never understand women till some woman gives him the key, and many are willing to give it in a most generous spirit.

I am sure that many ministers who may read this book will want to exclaim at this point, "But it is inconceivable that people should come to consult us on such matters. Boys and men are terribly reticent on this subject, and it is unthinkable that women should ever turn to us for help in this connection." I think that feeling is natural. I also know that it is mistaken. The stress of worry and perplexity that comes into many lives over this subject is so great that thousands of people, women as well as men, are only too thankful to take any opportunity that comes their way of taking counsel and finding sympathy. For that let us thank God.

None the less I have some practical things to say to ministers about the way in which we may make confidences easy. In the first place there is a definite piece of work waiting to be done in most congregations along the line of education in sex knowledge. We ought to try to secure both for boys and girls definite, clean, and accurate knowledge about sex. When parents are already giving such instruction all is well. When they are not—and that is a common case—we have a real responsibility. We ought to offer our own services to the older boys in the Sunday school, and to the Scouts or Rovers about the place. And we ought to try to find some woman to do the same service for the girls. We shall find that we can do something by general talks on suitable occasions, but we shall also find that the work of giving sufficiently complete knowledge has to be done with the boys one at a

time. Of course that takes time. It is time well spent.

And then there is something that can and ought to be done through preaching. There is a Christian view of sex in general, and there is a Christian view of marriage in particular, which ought to find occasional expression from the Christian pulpit. Nothing but instinctive tact can guide us in the handling of these subjects. But instinctive tact is really another way of speaking of the guidance of the spirit of God. And that is available for us all. When we have done our best along these two lines of service we shall be recognized as men who are alert to human need in this connection—who have escaped embarrassment and false shame—who are understanding, charitable, and sympathetic. Once that impression of us has been created people will come to us. They will come from outside our congregations and from inside too. Contrary to our expectations, women will come. They will come partly because, for mysterious reasons, it is easier for a woman to confide in a man than in another woman. They will come because they have reached a point when they can no longer carry their burdens alone. And they will come for this further reason that in many of their difficulties what they absolutely need is some help in understanding a man's nature and a man's point of view. Their difficulties may spring out of their love for some man, or perhaps out of their inability to love some man who loves them. And they want to know how to handle the situa-

tions that thus arise. And the person who can help them best is some other but disinterested man.<sup>1</sup>

I am also sure that very often it is a woman's help which a man needs when he is involved in similar situations and is perplexed, and that is one of the reasons which have led me to believe that the church should be willing to ordain women to the ministry.

"Priests," says Browning, "should study passion. How else help mankind who come for help in passionate extremes?" The truth of that view has been burnt in on me. And they should study passion not regarding it as an evil or terrible thing, but recognizing it as a gift from God, though one so dynamic and turbulent that to control it and make it productive of beauty and joy needs at times all the help which the spiritual resources can supply.

<sup>1</sup> Very occasionally some woman may come to see us who merely wants to get a spurious thrill out of talking about sex with a man. In such cases our part is simply to "refuse to play." They are easily recognized. There is nothing very serious about such an event. It may be that a woman has merely given in to a passing whim. There is nothing to be portentous about in such an occurrence. But it is very important, all the same, not to allow ourselves to take any part in that game.



## CHAPTER X

### UNMARRIED WOMEN FROM TWENTY-FIVE YEARS ONWARDS

I HAVE been severely taken to task by several women for whom I have very real respect and affection for what I have already said and written on this subject. They tell me that I have suggested that much suffering is inevitable for unmarried women, and that by suggesting it I induce it. In other words, they say that I have led some women to expect suffering, and to create it for themselves, when, if only they had had truer and more wholesome views suggested to them, they might have escaped suffering and been both healthy and happy. It has further been most politely suggested to me that women do not need men nearly so much as men like to think, and still further it has been said to me, "Of course all women suffer through the fact of sex, whether married or unmarried, but the unmarried need not suffer any more than their sisters who become involved with husbands and children."

In answer to these criticisms I wish to say firstly that I am quite willing to accept the rebukes thus most kindly administered to me. I have no doubt

that what I have written about this matter is incomplete and therefore partially untrue. I have the fact of these women critics and many others to prove the truth that women who do not marry often escape suffering, and without painful effort adjust themselves to a celibacy which they employ to the great advantage of mankind. Still less do I wish to insist on the suggestion that all women need men to complete their lives. I know that nearly all men need women—need them desperately and constantly throughout the whole of life. But I am willing to accept the statement that the converse of this is not true for a section of what used to be incorrectly called the weaker sex. Further, I believe in general and with conviction, that life holds no problems through which by the help of the grace of God a way may not be found to victory.

On the other hand, I know beyond all possible doubt that when we become aware of the real facts concerning those who turn to us in distress, we will find that a very great many women who do not marry begin somewhere about twenty-five to find life becoming very difficult for them. They very often do not realize for long what really is the matter with them, and when they do, they are often unwilling to speak about it. A curious convention has held it immodest for a woman to admit that she wants to be married. And a cruel convention has often poured ridicule on their dissatisfaction with a spinster's condition. Yet what could be more to be expected than that when the deepest instincts of a woman's being—the instincts for wifehood and

motherhood—are left unsatisfied, she should suffer inward strain and discomfort? Sex is clamant enough, God knows, in man; and with them its demands come fully into consciousness. But with women the demands of sex are really more clamant, or at least spring from deeper levels of their natures, only they do not come into consciousness as sex demands at all. They merely take the shape of a general sense of frustration in life, and of restless dissatisfaction with the whole content of their experience. Some of them suffer from time to time acute attacks of irritability, and know quite well that they are proving difficult to live with. Others get terribly restless and feel that they want to change their jobs, and the place they live in, and sometimes even the whole collection of people whom they generally meet. More often still they suffer acute attacks of depression, in which they even feel at times that they hardly have enough energy to go on with life.

These attacks of depression will often overshadow their whole spiritual condition. They find they cannot feel the appeal of any of the old truths. They declare they cannot pray. And although they may often go on with such forms of religious service as they have taken up, they will confess that they do so out of a sheer sense of duty and with no spontaneous joy in them at all. Frequently women in this condition suffer acute pangs of sheer jealousy when they see other girls in happy intimacy with their sweethearts or husbands; and then, as probably they despise jealousy, a certain self-contempt is

added to their other troubles. A great many women have told me that during "the thirties" they had such a longing for children that they could hardly bear to touch other people's children. And I have noticed with others, though they did not confess it, that they had tried to escape from that particular torment by hardening themselves against the charms of all children. Of course as time goes on these inward strains make their mark both on the appearance and the manners of many unmarried women. In various ways they become a little queer, or awkward, or nervous, or "spinsterish." And I am sure that hell would be too good for any men—ministers or others—who, having understood at all the real truth about such women, ever join in jeers at old maids.

Now a good many women do not know at all what really is the matter with them when these troubles fall on them. They do not know why they are depressed, and as depression is horribly akin to a sense of sin they often blame themselves for sins they have not committed, and suffer torments of conscience, when it is not their consciences but their nerves that are to blame. And that suggests the first thing that can be done for such women. They can be told the truth. And often it will be found that about half the burden on their spirits is lifted when they come to understand that their troubles are not due to mistakes they have made, but to the action of certain cells and glands in their bodies, and that, moreover, there is nothing special in their case, but that they are only facing what millions of

other women in similar circumstances have to face. It is true that certain women not yet delivered from the worst of the Victorian traditions will at first feel that there is something shameful in having any sensations whatever which are in any remote way connected with sex, for many of our forefathers really seem to have held that no modest woman could ever have any such feelings. Fortunately that evil tradition is now fast disappearing. But in one definite direction there is still much to be done. It remains true that many men and women still think it a shameful thing that a woman should have definite and conscious sex desire. If she even has to do battle with imaginations and interests which might be called undesirable she is held to be in some way a tainted person. I can scarcely imagine a more cruel attitude of mind. I remember a very nice girl once asking me in a whisper whether it was very wicked of her "to want a man," to which I replied, "Yes, if it is very wicked of you to be hungry every day and sleepy every night." That any of us should be asked to call ourselves sinners because we have the desires and instincts which are latent in our normal humanity is one of the most monstrous and monkish forms of cruelty and folly in the world. And so I repeat that it is possible to do something quite definitely and quickly to help unmarried women by explaining to them what is happening to them, and by delivering them from any false and mistaken sense of shame about it all.

In the second place, it is generally suggested that we should explain both to men and women in

whom sex cannot find its normal satisfaction, the glorious possibilities of sublimation. And with this I agree. But I have reason to know that we need to take care how we talk glibly and easily about sublimation. It is true that it can be achieved, and that the energy which is denied one outlet may find many others which are socially beneficial and deeply satisfying. But for many women it is a long and difficult learning, and the learning will be punctuated with periods in which the old natural longings will break out afresh, and the old depressions return with all their old intensity. To suggest to women that they *ought* to be able to achieve a perfect sublimation in a short period is both cruel and mistaken. And indeed there is a course which is often mistaken for sublimation, which is utterly deplorable. Both men and women in this particular case quite often have recourse to a process of self-hardening, in the course of which their generous humanity is dried up. Because their feelings give them pain, they decide not to have feelings. They repress their emotions. They subdue their capacity for love. They become hard, and matter of fact, and cold. They sterilize their sympathies. And in the end they do cease to suffer, at the price of having excluded themselves from many of the experiences which give life its real worth. That, of course, is not sublimation. But it is often mistaken for it. It is mere repression—a very different matter. Real sublimation consists in first of all facing and accepting the fact that we have certain very deep and strong desires connected with our sex natures, and

then in realizing that if these are denied expression in the normal way through marriage and parentage they may yet be turned into other channels and find great and useful expression. But there are no universal rules as to the direction in which such sublimation can be achieved. For some women, for instance, it is a very sound piece of advice that they should work among children. But for others it is quite useless advice. There are women who when married prove themselves to be mothers first and wives second, and there are others who all their lives are wives first and mothers second. For this second class, when they are unmarried, it is of no use to attempt to solve their problem by working among children. And it might prove terribly hard on the children. Nor is it enough to say in general, as a friend of mine once said, "Work, and then more work, is the sovereign remedy." Work of some kinds, constantly engaged in, will desiccate and wither the natures of both men and women. And it may also involve them in torments in the process. And yet, of course, there is much wisdom in that advice, for none of us can be healthy either in body or mind unless we are reasonably busy. It is fatal to have too much time in which to attend to ourselves and our feelings.

But it is very important that women of the kind I am speaking of should find the right kind of work. It is an almost universally true statement that it is better for them to work with persons than with things. They need human relationships of many sorts, and would do well to take pains to form them.

And certainly it is true that such women ought to be afforded plenty of the society of both sexes. What many unmarried women most bitterly resent is not that they are unmarried but that they are shut up to the society of their own sex all the time. And they will resent that even although they may think that their sex is the superior sex. (What a silly idea it is that either sex is superior as a whole to the other!) Of course they resent it. Much of the colour of life comes from the interplay of the sexes, and there is no reason under heaven why unmarried women should be debarred from that. There are some institutions that ought forthwith to be abolished. One of them is the girls' boarding-school in which the whole staff of teachers is shut up in a set of buildings all the time, and has no contact at all with the other sex. Such teachers may all be more or less saints, but they are certain to be hard put to it not to hate each other more or less before each term is over. When such women do meet men they may find them rough and difficult. But at least they find them stimulating. And the sexes are evidently not meant to charm each other all the time. They must be meant to provoke and jostle each other, for out of that much stimulation arises. Further, it is certain that society has much yet to learn about its plain duty to spinsters. They are often simply left out of account—allowed to live in solitude—allowed to grow strange, and then laughed at because of the inevitable results. And the blame for them lies on society itself. Society will never be Christian till



we have learnt to take pains to draw these women into its general life. Unmarried men are much in request socially. Unmarried women are often so neglected that they have a sense of inferiority forced on them. And that is monstrous. No doubt things are better than they were because women have now such a much larger place in the working world. But that is not enough. We all need a place in the social world, because it is in that world alone that many valuable parts of our natures find play. Of women that is specially true. They need friendships—and friendships with people of both sexes. The convention still lingers that a friendship between a man and a woman should only be allowed to spring up when there is a possibility of marriage between them. It is time that that convention should be abolished. It belonged to an age more primitive than ours. Among the unmarried women of this country there are many with outstanding gifts—mental, artistic, literary, political, and spiritual. When they give their friendship it is a stimulating and enriching gift, and they themselves find through friendship great pleasure and a sense of fulfilment. When they are allowed to shrink into loneliness the life of society is impoverished.

It has, of course, to be admitted that some unmarried women who are unhappy and ill adjusted to life and the world would be no better if they were married, because it is not their unmarried state that accounts for their condition. Married or unmarried, we all need to learn courage, and unselfishness, and

good temper, if we are to find the joy that is latent in life. And these moral qualities are *not* given by the marriage ceremony, nor are they necessarily the product of passionate love. There are some spinsters who have made their unmarried condition an excuse for adopting a defeatist attitude to life.

I take no pleasure in thinking of the faults of other people, and still less in telling such people about those faults. But if only somebody could be found who was kind enough, and hopeful enough, and humble enough, to tell the truth to a certain section of mankind, I know that what he would have to say would be: "You men and women will never find any life that is worth living till you face yourselves and the problems of your own lives. You are at present self-centred, peevish, bad-tempered, lazy, cowardly, irritable, and pleasure loving. Marriage would not change you. If you did marry in your present condition, God help your mate! No doubt you have many unfulfilled desires which are also natural and legitimate desires. But the question of getting what you want fills all your thoughts, because you yourself are always in the centre of the picture. While that continues no change in your outward state can help you much. But if you come to the point when you allow God to take control of you, and deliver you from yourselves, then, married or unmarried, there is a life waiting for you in which you may find profound joy—profound because it will be unselfish."

And now I have one more point of great importance. It is often cynically asserted that unmarried

women take to religion as a substitute for love and marriage, and that the religious life is chiefly a way of releasing and expressing emotions which would normally find other outlets. In fact religion is labelled as a sex substitute.

A generalization like that is palpable nonsense in view of the fact that many men and women who are happily married none the less find religion to be the supreme thing that makes life worth living, and which goes on giving life significance and joy. They also declare that they need the help of religion intensely and constantly for the successful conduct of married life and family life. It is indeed my firm conviction that nothing finally solves that central problem which is at the heart of the life of every individual, except a sense of the reality of the love of God. All the other contents of life taken together are pronounced in the long run "not good enough," even by those who are free to enjoy many of them. Man is as great as that. He refuses to be satisfied by anything less than God. And that is why those who are strangers to God are so often cynical and life weary.

That then being so, what greater cause of gratitude could there be than that the love of God is available for us all, whether our lives here are cramped and lonely, or greatly enlarged. If it be true that we are all free to walk in God's large places, and have at the heart of our lives a deep content, what could be more sublime? And it is true.

I have seen that fullness of life and that spiritual emancipation achieved by normal healthy and

successful people. But I have also seen it achieved by chronic invalids, by people in great poverty, by men and women whom the world had neglected, and by souls who had passed through great trials. And I know, therefore, that here is the supreme good news for unmarried women, as for all others for whom life has in any way become hard. God is available. The love of God may be discovered as an inexpressibly wonderful and real fact. And when it is so discovered our personal problem is solved. I know very well that many people who are enduring the pangs of unsatisfied love would say if only they spoke out, "But I don't want God. He seems so far away and so cold. I want the warm arms of a fellow-man or woman. I want that consummation of life in which soul and body are at last at one." Yes, I know that, and God knows that, and He is touched by the feeling of our infirmities.

But there is a way that leads past those most human and bitter hours. There is a sense in which we may come to stand a little apart from our ordinary surface living and survey it as spectators. Living within a citadel where peace reigns we can watch its turmoils and be only partially moved by them. We can even regard our bodies with their strains and stresses as partially outside *us*, and look on at our sex problems with a sort of understanding compassion. To attain that inner life which is hid with God is the only ultimate and perfect solution of the problem of life not only for unmarried women, but for all men and women—

married or unmarried. I have tried to be of some use to many unmarried women, and have been greatly enriched by their friendship. But I know that I have only been of real and lasting use to them in so far as I have performed for them that which is a minister's special function, and have helped them to know God in Christ for themselves.

## CHAPTER XI

### MARRIAGES IN TROUBLE

I KNOW that English men and English women are desperately unwilling when their marriages are in difficulty to turn to any third party for help. And the Scotch are even more fiercely proud and reticent. I rather admire that type of reserve. And yet I have come to believe in the wisdom of those who break through it. For often the gain is very real when two people who are in difficulties discuss them with a third party.

One thing that holds married people back from taking such a step is unwillingness to admit in any such definite way that their marriages *are* failing. We all like to deceive ourselves as long as possible. In many other connections we will not seek help because we will not admit that we cannot manage our own lives, though the fact stares us in the face. So husbands and wives go on pretending to the world, and to each other, and even to themselves, that there is nothing much the matter, when in fact the whole situation is desperately serious. I have faced the situation again and again *after* marriages had crashed, but in nearly forty years of pastoral work I have not been allowed to try to help

in more than ten or twelve cases before the trouble had led to a rupture. Even when one of the two persons concerned has confided in me, I have often been forbidden to say anything to the other, and of course real help can only be given when the confidence of both has been won.

Therefore while I would warn others against any attempt to push themselves into such situations, and even against allowing themselves to be pushed into them by relations, I do on the other hand wish that I could reach many married couples with the advice that they should go and ask the help of some experienced person, and should do it before the situation becomes intense.

It is, I think, a great pity that Judge Lindsey of America is chiefly known in this country because of his advocacy of Companionate Marriage, because that suggestion is to my mind a hopeless suggestion. But Judge Lindsey's real title to respect and gratitude consists in the fact that he has rescued large numbers of marriages from failure. He has talked with couples who had reached the point of thinking of divorce, and by getting down to the real root of the trouble with them has persuaded them to try again—and often with great success.

There are definite reasons why an outsider can help. Firstly, he can sometimes relieve the feelings of both and relax the tension of the situation by pointing out that really nothing so very serious is happening. Ninety-nine per cent. of marriages go through difficult periods. This is partly due to

the fact that there is a certain rhythmic rise and fall in the vitality of all of us, which affects our general supply of energy, and which creates positive and negative periods in our artistic life. In our spiritual life, and in the chapter on "Dryness." And these difficult periods are also due to the fact that two persons who have attained to the fact that two persons the less go on good adjustment at one age, none attain readjustment growing up, and therefore have to is quite normal at later stages. And all this have been very. Many persons, especially if they emotionally very much in love, are apt to become. They declare, "Oh, it is all up." And a third person of experience may be able to bring back is very far and quietness by pointing out that "All curiously from being up." Then secondly, it is accept criticism and advice from third parties which they cannot accept from each other. I remember said to me, a Scotch gamekeeper who once to cast me, "I wish you would teach my wife how wife." a fly, for no husband can teach his own with this. I have no doubt at all what had happened doing that man. He had told his wife that she was situation, the thing all wrong, and immediately the not still had become emotional, because she could husband and being talked to in that way by her from him. She liked to hear only loving words. When him. And so it is in thousands of cases. how husbands do try to explain to their wives they are failing as wives, they generally become



emotional in the process, and in case they say more than is true and so by overstating their wives resent that, and decrease. And of course they have become cross and hostile that their husbands. When wives voice their complaint. And vice versa. fail to remain accurate, and laments they very often tearful. And then their husbands become excited and puzzled and annoyed, go off saying, being both about "hysterical women who go saying foolish things about nothing." Yet both may learn off the deep end to deal with something quite true have been trying and if either could be helped to see and important, might be gained. That is why a third person who has no motive for exaggeration may be sometimes of real use.

Of course as the situation clears itself it may become clear that either the wife or the husband has to face and accept something really disappointing in the other. I have several times said to a husband, "Your wife is *that* kind of woman. You cannot make her into the kind of woman you have fashioned for yourself by your imagination. She lacks certain abilities and will always lack them. She will never love you in just that ideal way you think you would like. She has certain tastes which you do not share, and she also has certain weaknesses which will always remain. And you had better face and accept these facts. But then she also has some splendid qualities, and it was very natural that you came to love her. You can't have all you want, but you might make a great deal of what you have. And if you go bravely forward in that way, you

will only be doing what all happy and successful husbands have to do."

There is no cynicism in such advice. It is just plain practical common sense.

And a similar speech might with advantage be made to many wives. "Your husband is, I have no doubt, often selfish. Most men are. And he will not change some of his ways to please you, but goes on stubbornly in the ways he likes. If you married him with the plan in your mind of re-making him to your heart's desire, you did a very silly thing. And sometimes he is childish. Again most men are. And he doesn't care about lots of the things for which you care. And he has been known to get into a temper or have a fit of the sulks. But he is the man whom you accepted, and you know there is a great deal in him which you love. And after all you would not respect him if he had not a will of his own. And so there really is nothing for it but to make up your mind that you will not fuss about the things that have caused friction, and that you *will* make a success of your marriage all the same." That is what all successful wives have had to do more or less.

In the third place, a very great many marriages get into trouble because of the fact that sexual adjustment is often far from an easy thing to attain, and that it has to be attained again and again as life passes from one stage to another. In this respect British wives and husbands have until lately been at a great disadvantage, inasmuch as there was no adequate book for them to consult on the subject

of the technique of married life. They were allowed to marry in complete ignorance of the terms on which, and the methods by which, sexual adjustment can be reached. The result of that has been that in thousands of cases a woman's first experiences of sexual intimacy within marriage have been unpleasant and inharmonious. When that has happened she is very apt to acquire a distaste for this whole side of marriage, and after that married happiness in the full sense becomes almost impossible. Though she may not know it, a woman wants and needs complete and harmonious sexual experience, and when she does not attain it she is conscious of a want in her life, though she may not know what it is. With a man the case is very different. He has conscious and intense sexual desire; and when he finds that he can only have satisfaction from his wife in ways which are to her distasteful, then the more he truly loves her the greater will be his disappointment and his sense of frustration. In general terms it may be said that many British husbands are unskilful lovers—crude, hurried, and without delicacy. And as a result they never succeed in awakening their wives. Women, on the other hand, are sometimes, owing to a wholly mistaken sex education, unwilling to be awakened, and so remain cold and unresponsive, though it may none the less be true that in the depths of their beings they long for complete experience. The situation in this respect has been greatly improved of late, by the publication of Dr. Helena Wright's book called *The Sex Factor*

*in Marriage.* When marriages have gone wrong it has often been proved that the information contained in that book has shown the way to a new adjustment, after which many of the other minor problems of marriage prove easy of solution. What is essential between the two is complete frankness. And yet very often such frankness has never been attained. I came across a case lately in which the husband was living under the delusion that his wife was cold and unresponsive, because once he had made unsuccessful advances to her when she was so overcome with fatigue that she was incapable of response. But as a matter of fact that wife was suffering from acute and conscious sex starvation. It seemed to me a pitiful situation, because it was having rather serious consequences. And it might have been ended in five minutes if those two could have attained to frankness. I have had the happy experience of being able to send a couple who were in trouble to the right doctor, and of seeing them attain very soon to a new and hitherto undreamt-of happiness, because they had been taught certain important things which all married persons ought to know. And I have reason for believing that a great many marriages might be saved in similar ways. Perhaps nothing can save a marriage when love is dead. But the tragedy of the present situation is that many couples who do truly love each other are yet in trouble through failure to manage this intensely important part of married life.

I have heard lately of several couples who had

actually reached the point of thinking about divorce, but who were saved through a new religious experience which came to both, after which both became willing to confess that they had been much to blame, and through such mutual humility, and through real mutual forgiveness, an entirely new state of matters was attained. In such cases also the help of a third party had been needed. Some husbands and some wives need to be told quietly, by some friendly third person, that they have been behaving in preposterous ways such as no wife or husband could be expected to stand. And when that information is given in a really friendly and disinterested way it can be received with humility. And then all good things may happen.

I have known husbands who expected their wives to remain happy and uncomplaining, though they spent all their leisure time on golf links or in clubs, and insisted on spending an absurd proportion of the family's income on their sports. And I have known wives who expected their husbands to submit to being ordered about in a hundred and one petty ways within the house, and to remain unmoved though their wives made fun of them in public. It seems incredible that people should ever be so utterly stupid. Yet these things and others like them are common. Truly, married persons throw their own happiness to the winds through selfishness and folly. And then they expect sympathy in their future sufferings. If they would only enter marriage in the firm conviction that a successful marriage is like a great work of

art which can only be produced by patience and hard work, and a great deal of unselfishness coupled with common sense, they might attain the joy for which they really long, but which now they so often miss.

I have come to think that it will prove impossible to maintain the institution of marriage in the respect of mankind, if the idea is retained that the husband has a "right" of access to his wife's body whenever he wishes it. I do not wonder that some women who know that sex experience may be beautiful when it is spontaneously desired by both parties, yet shrink from marriage because they think that within marriage sex intimacy may be forced upon an unwilling woman. I can understand that they think such a conception of things disgusting and even immoral.

I know that St. Paul was a very great theologian, and that he had the insight of genius into religious truth. But I do not find him a reliable teacher about marriage. When he says, "Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence," he carries us all with him. But when he goes on to say, "The wife hath not the power of her own body, but the husband," he makes the very mistake which has wrought such tragic suffering within the married relationship. It is true he goes on to say that "the husband hath not the power of his own body but the wife," but still he suggests that each party in a marriage has a certain right of demand over against the other. And *that* is the fatal suggestion. Within the world of true love there are no rights of demand. How much St. Paul's influence has helped

to give sanction to an evil tradition I do not know. But to save marriage we must break that tradition. The fundamental condition for happy and beautiful sex experience within marriage is that such experience must be mutually desired on every occasion.

Of course this means that a process of mutual accommodation must go on within every marriage, for it is a very rare thing to find a man and a woman joined in marriage who have naturally the same tempo. But that process of mutual accommodation is fairly easily achieved once the two have learnt to be frank with one another, and provided that neither of them falls into the deadly delusion that the marriage ceremony is a signal for the end of all restraint.

It is, I think, beyond question that women to-day are looking for something finer and more complete in marriage than did women last century. Marriages on the old rather rough-and-ready terms will not satisfy the women who have been awakened by the new status of women in the world. And this means that for men marriage is a more complex, delicate, and difficult undertaking than it used to be. It also means that marriage *may* become something really more satisfying, and more abundantly productive of joy than any but a few exceptional marriages in the past.

But inasmuch as these difficulties are there for both men and women in marriage might it not be a good thing and a wise thing if both husbands and wives tried to learn patience and to judge each other with gentleness.

In this transition period such kindness of attitude might prevent a great deal of suffering. We are being called on not so much to save the institution of marriage as to make of it something better than it has ever been so that it may approve itself to all mankind. Otherwise it will certainly be in danger.

I wonder whether without the help of God it can be done! Again and again in this book I have expressed my conviction that only a very real spiritual experience can bring to the individual that liberation and harmony for which we all long, and which we need if we are to enter successfully into personal relations. But if a man is not happy within himself because he has not found the way to resolve his internal disharmonies, is it likely that he will be able to make a woman happy? And if a woman still remains the victim of those forms of restlessness and irritability which spring from a disordered inward condition, is it likely that she will ever make a good wife to any man?

I have often found that people who have not got a religion resent the expression of this view. They say, "That may be true for those who can have a religion, but it is of no use for us, and yet we also have to solve this marriage problem as well as many others." Such people really make a demand that man without God should be able to attain fullness of life and harmonious adjustment. They are, in a sense, offended by the suggestion that they need God.

I cannot help feeling acute sympathy for many such people. I know so well how hard it is for many people to attain to any real religion. I know



that many have tried for long and are positively exasperated by their failure. And for those who have tried for long and without success I can understand that it must seem almost intolerable when they hear parsons and others saying with dogmatic confidence, that they *ought* to have a religion. Indeed, it remains for me one of the deep mysteries of life that God should seem so hidden from many souls who yet need Him, and that they should suffer so for want of Him.

And yet I must at least say this—that I know of no solution for the intimate problems of our personal lives—both in marriage and apart from it—except that one which consists in a joyous and complete surrender to His spirit, who is able to be our strength and our director and our joy. And among the many reasons that keep me to the work of trying to teach and persuade men and women concerning the secrets of spiritual life, this does increasingly stand out—that I believe really happy and beautiful marriages are one of the conspicuous gifts of the spirit of God.

## CHAPTER XII

### TRIANGULAR SITUATIONS

I GREW up in the simple faith that good women never fall in love with married men, and that good wives never love any other men than their husbands. Women were supposed never to allow themselves to feel the attractions of any men who were not available as husbands.

It was not modern novels that shattered that faith in me. It was first-hand experience. I remember vividly the first shock which it received. A woman came to me who said, "I am the daughter of one minister and the wife of another. I believed that no good woman, once she is married, could ever fall in love with another man. But it has happened to me. I did not want it to happen. I wish it had not happened. But it has. Can you help me?" Since that day I have heard similar stories from the lips of a dozen or more human beings. Most of them have been single women who love married men. Some of them have been married women whose marriages had failed, and who had come to love a second man.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> By the word love in this chapter I do not mean merely a strong sexual attraction, but that deep affection which involves heart and mind as well as the body.

Apparently love "just happens." It need not, of course, be ever confessed. But it happens in a way against which neither common sense, nor sound morality, nor sincere religion are a protection. Some other human being appears on the scene whose personality touches into life unsuspected capacities of ardent affection, and at once the man or woman concerned is shaken and transformed. A very lovable woman, now dead, said to me some years ago, "I thought I was quite cold. The men who made love to me when I was a girl never stirred me. My husband, whom I never pretended to love, never succeeded in awakening me. And then X appeared, and I found that merely to touch his hand thrilled me through and through." And she was both a very able and a deeply religious woman. Yet another said to me, "I did not want to love him. I tried not to. Loving him has meant years of suffering. But I was helpless."

I find that some people treat such cases either with contempt, or with blunt condemnation, or with scepticism about the truth of the stories which they tell. I have also met women who declare, "No woman need let herself fall in love until she wants to." But I know now that such women are wrong, and I also know that until we ministers and others realize the fact that things do happen in the way I have indicated, we shall be quite useless to help some of the people who most need help. Quite lately a splendid woman came to see me. A married man had fallen passionately in love with her, and had wooed her ardently. She had utterly refused to

allow him to express his love in any physical ways beyond handshaking, but he had awakened her love. She was determined to help him, and to persuade him to a reconciliation with his wife and a new start. None the less she felt an acute need both of sympathy and advice, and she told me that nobody could have been of any use at all to her who either merely condemned the man who loved her, or who would have thought her a wrong-doer because she had learnt to love. The very next month I met another woman in another country who told me her story. She was a distinguished social worker, and a woman for whom religion meant a great deal. But she had not managed her "affair" wisely, and had begun to suspect that herself. And so she had come to long for a man's advice. But she was also very clear that it had to be a man who understood that love "just happens," and that it creates situations in which genuine perplexity about the right way is very common. To meet all these souls in distress with the rigid dogma that love, except between husband and wife, is wicked is a quite unhelpful procedure. It is often a cruel procedure. And if it is cruel it is wicked.

I have wished ardently that I could find one unbending rule to be applied to all such situations. I have not found it. One general reflection they do indeed suggest, namely that it is a far more serious and culpable thing than is generally realized to marry lightly or indeed for any reason but the compelling reason of true love. Thirty years ago a young man who ought to have known better married merely out

of pity a girl whom he did not love and who could never be a true mate to him, and the result is that another woman who is great in every sense has had to endure for twenty years the torments of unfulfilled love, and he himself has never known what it is to have a true wife. About the same time another man who had become engaged in a passing sentimental mood to a girl he did not love was none the less weak enough to marry her. The result was first seven years of growing unhappiness *for them both*. Then there followed ten years of separation and loneliness, and after that came the crisis. A woman with a great heart gave him that heart and he discovered for the first time what real love is. And that foolish marriage blocked their way into real life. And so I might go on with story after story.

To men and women who have failed to find fulfilment and peace in marriage, and to whom another love has happened, I have often said, "Why did you marry as you did?" And one by one they have replied, "Because I was a fool." Many a man who marries with doubts in his heart says to himself, "Anyway, I will give her a good time, and if I suffer I will not complain." And such men really do not seem to know that a man cannot give a woman a good time unless he loves her, and that if he himself suffers he cannot prevent others becoming involved in his sufferings. Many a woman has made the same mistake, saying, "I will be a good wife to him and never let him see that I do not really love him." But though many men are stupid, few, if any, are so stupid as to be long deceived in that

way. And when a man finds that he is married to a woman who does not really love him and who therefore *cannot* be a true wife to him, he is terribly apt to get into that state in which love may "just happen" both to him and to somebody else. Assuredly if the acute pain of triangular situations is to become less common men and women will have to learn to take a great deal more care before they enter into marriage.

Another general reflection that suggests itself is that these difficult and painful situations would become *much* less common if husbands and wives always understood enough about the technique of married life to attain sexual adjustment. In plain English the married people who fall in love with other men or women often do so simply because though married they are living in a state of sex starvation. But on that point I have said what I believe needs to be said in the chapter on "Marriages in Trouble."

Beyond these preliminary generalizations, what is to be said when the difficult cases have to be faced? In cases where the man and the woman are still young I believe the best advice which can be given is exactly the advice which is most unwelcome, namely, "Decide to cease to see each other and surrender firmly and finally all thought of the natural fulfilment of your love in this life." In many cases when that plan is followed the married man or woman concerned will turn to face the problem of rescuing his or her marriage from utter failure, and may after all attain a large measure of success. I

have seen that happen. It happened in two of the cases I have referred to above. I would never say to any human being, "Kill your love!" It might perhaps be possible in some cases. But I would not say that because I believe real love to be a divine thing. To kill it would be sacrilege. But the fact that it cannot have fulfilment in this life can be accepted. Those who do accept that fact may have to go through a veritable Gethsemane. But they emerge from Gethsemane richly endowed with powers to bless others. That is the exact explanation of one or two of the most beautiful and helpful lives I have ever known.

But the decision must be a definite and a thorough one. I have watched four or five couples who would not make that decision, and would not think of the way out through divorce, but who went on seeing each other and enjoying intensely emotional hours, though they never became lovers in the full sense. In all such cases the strain on the women became cruelly intense. One of them died under it. Several others had serious nervous breakdowns. Two or three had serious illnesses due to the strain. None of them, at least for years, were able to settle down to any harmonious and creative manner of life.

And yet though I feel in this way about a great many cases, I cannot in honesty say that I believe this course of separation is invariably the best for all concerned. In some cases the marriages involved have plainly and permanently broken down. In some the husband and wife no longer live in the same

house. In others, though they dwell under the same roof in order to keep up appearances, they have for long been separated in reality. For such cases I often believe in divorce, and in the name of decency and morality I resent a divorce law which makes divorce possible for those who will stoop to a sordid deceit, or a degrading experience, and denies it to decent men and women who shrink from such base proceedings.

Those who would refuse divorce in all cases never seem to me to have faced the realities of modern life. They argue in the abstract and become eager about generalities, which to me seem irrelevant in view of pressing human needs. It is impossible to maintain that the best way to conserve morality and to forward the development of personality is to condemn the man who is married only in name to life-long loneliness and frustration, and to sentence the woman with whom he has come to share a real love to celibacy and unfulfilled womanhood. And of course I would say exactly the same thing when it is an unloved wife who has found love outside her marriage. By the policy of maintaining the marriage in apparent but unreal existence two lives are impoverished, and the third party who no longer cares is not really benefited. Nor is it possible to say that society gains through that policy. Society loses when two lives are impoverished.

I cannot even think it true that divorce should always be avoided when children have to be considered. I agree that their rights ought to come first, and that to sacrifice their futures in order that two



lovers may have what they want is a base course. But the situation is not simple. It is a very bad thing indeed for children to be brought up in a house in which a husband and wife are living in a state of miserable antagonism or acute unhappiness. There is no real substitute for the happy home. But there are many arrangements that are better than letting children in their susceptible years be in daily contact with one of the saddest things in modern life.

Therefore I believe that the solution of the problem I am handling by way of divorce should in many cases be at least carefully and honestly considered. There is at least something open and honest about divorce. People shun it, not because they do not desire it, but because of the social stigma now attached to it. It is just that convention of attaching stigma to divorce which I believe needs re-examination. For there is an alternative which is now often adopted—very often, and that is the plan of carrying on a double life, and living with another man or woman while still married in name. And that is a poor, furtive, unsatisfying, and morally loosening way of life.

Of course when the wife or the husband in the background has *not* ceased to care, but still loves, I see no true course for the other two who love each other but the way of complete separation. I have nothing to say in defence of the man who with a wife who still loves him, and wants to be a wife to him, yet proceeds to develop a love affair with another woman. I may have sympathy with him and pity for him, if this second love "happens" to

him. But I see no honourable course open to him but to cut out altogether his unorthodox romance. And to the unmarried woman in such a case I would always want to say—and in fact often have said—“Do realize that though you think at times that you could have a beautiful love affair with such a man, you would all the time be wronging another woman in the background, and that that fact will infallibly rob your affair of its beauty and truth in the end.”

And yet there is still something further to be said about this problem. There are cases in which a married man and an unmarried woman have been able to keep in being a beautiful love relationship without physical intimacy because the man's wife became definitely a consenting party to the arrangement. Some wives, of course, can truly say that they do not care, because they have ceased to be emotionally interested in their husbands. But some belong to that small class of very great women who can rise above jealousy, and by accepting the facts of the case find a happy solution for all concerned. Very often I have found myself wishing that more wives might be found capable of that greatness—and more husbands when the situation is reversed. Such people do not ultimately suffer for the course they adopt. They escape the pangs of jealousy, and often find that a great deal of worth and beauty is left to them in their marriages. I cannot conceive that such a course is always possible. Perhaps it is only very rarely possible. For a married person who remains in love to find that his or her partner in marriage is always cold and unresponsive may

cause sheer torment, even when there is no other love involved. When there is such another love in the background who can blame the man or the woman who becomes acutely jealous! But things which are impossible for most of us have yet been achieved by a few people. Some men and some women are very great.

The suggestion, nowadays so often made, that married persons should be left free from all social condemnation, though they develop love affairs outside their marriages and consummate them in the full sense leaves me entirely unconvinced. I have come to see for myself why the Christian standard has always been so strict in that connection. I have watched the course of several affairs of the kind suggested, and have yet to find one that did not produce acute and pitiful suffering. One friend of mine in particular made a very full trial of this plan. She accepted the love of a married man and gave him with unthinking generosity all that he asked. And he asked everything. He declared that she was a very great help to him, inasmuch as his wife was of the incurably spinster type. And my friend was made very happy by the thought that she was of value to one whom she both loved and admired. But ere long I came to resent the situation acutely *for* my friend. That married man could not give her what she really wanted. He could not give her a home or children or the comfort of his constant help in life. She was to him only a companion in occasional hours of acute and passionate emotion. But she needed him as her companion for the whole

of life. She needed the joy of a love that was entirely free from subterfuge or concealment. And there came a point when I most truly feared that the strain of her incomplete and frustrated life was going to kill her.

No! a man cannot give to two women all that a man ought to give a woman when he becomes her lover. And a woman cannot give to two men all that a man most deeply and truly needs from his lover.

All these reflections on this perplexing subject will be pronounced inconclusive and vague. I fully admit the charge. I have not found the one clear-cut and universal remedy for all such cases. I believe indeed that each case has to be considered by itself. Paths of life which are possible for some are plainly impossible for others. Our rough, crude, dogmatic generalities would crush and mangle some sensitive souls if they were always enforced. God cannot will that.

The one thing that I am certain about is that in so far as any of us are called upon to be concerned with such cases in actual life we cannot bring to them too much charity, too much sympathy, or too much understanding. Generally in such cases somebody has to carry a heavy cross. Often all three have to carry crosses. And crosses which are bearable in a sympathetic world are intolerable in a merely critical one.

The ultimate help for such people lies in the sympathy of God. Ministers might at least try to become media, through which that sympathy may reach some of the casualties in the world of love.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AWAKENED AND DESERTED WOMEN

I HAVE an appeal to make to men concerning a form of cruelty of which they are often guilty. And I make my appeal hopefully because I believe that in this connection they do not understand what they are doing.

I begin with stating the fact that a woman's sexual longings very seldom come into consciousness until she has been awakened by the love-making of some man. We men inevitably find this hard to understand. We are made so differently. We notice that most normal women are interested in men, and even seek their society; so that we imagine they are sexually awake. But they are not. Deep down in the unconscious realms of their natures sexual desire and latent passion slumber, but all that comes to consciousness is a certain instinctive pleasure in the society of the other sex. And so long as that state of matters continues a woman is mistress of herself and may live happily and usefully though unmarried. But if once a man makes ardent love to such an unawakened woman the situation may change profoundly. His love-making need not proceed to the ultimate physical union in order to

produce this effect. Even though it be expressed only in ardent kisses and strong caresses, it may awaken the slumbering passion in the woman. And then probably she will respond with affectionate gestures of her own, and the whole experience will become a very intense one for both. It will also seem indescribably delightful, and therein lies its snare. For many a man thinks he may treat girls in that way with a good conscience even although he is married already, or has for some other reason no intention of forming any permanent bond with a woman. He has not "compromised her." He has only had a pleasant hour, or day, of dalliance. After it he is able to go back to his wife or to his ordinary occupations warmed by a pleasant memory, but in no way seriously affected.

What I want to do here and now is to tell him the other half of the story. For the woman cannot do anything of that sort. She is now, and by his agency, an awakened woman. She has known what a sense of consuming ardour means. She has thrilled through all her being, and felt that powers she had not dreamt of are alive in her. She may live happily for a few days on the memory of such an experience—possibly even for a week or two. But then inevitably her awakened nature cries out for a repetition of that experience. A hunger has come to birth in her, and demands satisfaction. In the cases I have known well there has always been present also some real love of the spirit for the man concerned, though I have no reason for believing that that is always so. At that stage and in that

state women are not able to distinguish at all clearly between these two forms of love. But the fact that stands out is that they have been put into a condition that means cruel suffering. Awakened but unsatisfied sex desire seems to shake a woman's whole nature to its depths. Mind, heart, and body are all involved to an extent which men rarely understand.

Two friends of mine, when in this condition, were once or twice so intensely tempted to suicide that they remained for months in pitiful fear that they might give way. I once had to go to a woman's house late on a Saturday night and refuse to leave it until she had given me the poison which she had threatened to use. Another once put a sentence into a letter which haunted me for weeks. "My body aches for him," she said. And I happen to know what lay behind those few words.

Only three alternatives are open to such women. One is taken by those who harden themselves against all feeling and slowly gain self-possession by repressing some of their finest instincts. These are often women with a fine pride in them. But these are also the women whom we meet and pronounce hard, cynical, unwomanly and so on.

A second course is taken by some who say in effect "we cannot do without the satisfaction of this awakened instinct, and if we cannot have it on the finest terms we will have it on such terms as we can." These women become "man hunters," and for a time at least they spoil themselves in the process. And we meet them also in later days and are apt to think hard thoughts about them. But the root

of all the sorrow and waste was planted by some ignorant and foolish man.

The third course open to such women involves a journey through Gethsemane. It is taken by those who say in effect we will *not* harden our hearts, and we will *not* try to satisfy ourselves with any second best. We will endure by the help of God what may come to us, and not whine. What secret agonies such women go through, and what fiery longings rack and torment them, no man can know—and only a few women. But when they emerge from their Gethsemanes they often have won something priceless of the kind that can only be purchased by “agony and bloody sweat.”

Now I know that most of us men are ignorant, and, where women are concerned, stupid and blundering. But I do not think that more than a very small percentage of us are cruel. Wherefore I believe that if we understood this subject we would *not* do the things which lead to such suffering. It is possible to effect this awakening with girls as young as eighteen or thereabouts, and we cannot take too much care about the ways in which we treat girls at that lovely stage. It is much more easily possible to effect this awakening with women from the middle twenties onwards, and their sufferings if they are awakened and then in effect deserted will be much more profound than any of a young girl's experiences. Not more than one or two women in a hundred will consent to be awakened by mere physical caresses. They will not suffer such caresses until they believe they are loved. And therefore



men make love in words to begin with and so induce the state in which a woman will consent to be "cherished." But such women attach more meaning than the men did to such love-making in words. They assume that if he said "that" and "that" he *must* have been deeply and permanently in love. And often the men concerned did not mean anything very deep or permanent at all. They were just having a pleasant hour with an attractive or a congenial woman. And they went their ways and thought not very much about it.

But I believe most men are good sorts at bottom. And good sorts do not take their own pleasures at the cost of condemning other human beings to the tortures of the damned. I would like to say quite frankly to my fellow-men, "You see, I know about these things because quite a number of women have told me all about it, and made me understand. I do not think they very often take men into their confidence in that way. And I feel they have put upon me the responsibility of sharing with you this knowledge in order that you may not out of carelessness or selfishness be horribly cruel without realizing it."

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE LONELINESS OF WIDOWS

WITH widows I include wives whose husbands are no longer of any use to them—wives whose marriages died years ago. Many of these women are very busy and do a great deal of fine service for the community. Many of them have children in whose lives they take a constant and helpful interest. Some of them seem always to be surrounded by other people who more or less lean on them. Single women envy them with good reason. Their lives seem to be very full and very useful. What more could anybody ask or expect! But that is not the whole story. When they get away by themselves such women are often lonely with a desperate loneliness which aches like toothache. They give themselves to others, but have no one on whom in turn they can lean. They take an interest in the love affairs of the young, and those young folk assume that they—the widows—have long passed the age of caring about love. And in fact these women, like all other women, and like all men, need someone to call them "Dear." The inner chamber of their hearts is empty, and when they retire into it their hearts cry out. Some of them are physically lonely, and an absurd convention

implies that they ought to be ashamed of the fact. Which is a cruel state of affairs.

Widowers who suffer in a similar way generally find some woman who will share the remainder of life with them. Widows are left to suffer, and few people realize how intense is their pain. Those who have been happily married find that their most sacred memories are partly a pain. "Tears rise in the heart and gather to the eyes when thinking of the days that are no more." And if they have not been happily married they still suffer, for they have at least a vivid sense of what it might mean to have somebody always near who would share everything with them.

Of course all widows do not thus suffer. Some seem to have a positive gift for widowhood. They enjoy and adorn the office. But very many do thus suffer, and they generally have no one to whom they can ever mention their need. Many of them are naturally very reserved.

But the rest of us might at least realize these things. Those who can pray might remember them when we pray. At times we might use such chances as come to us of showing that we understand. That would make the world a kinder place.

## CHAPTER XV

### SOLITARY SEX EXPERIENCE

#### A CHAPTER FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO HELP OTHERS

ALL intimate contact with human beings involves encountering the fact that what is called masturbation is very common, and is a great cause of worry, loss of self-respect, and anxiety.

I am not concerned to discuss how common it is. Those who say that ninety-five per cent. of male beings have had recourse to it at some point or other in life may be right. I do not think so, but the point does not greatly interest me. What I do know is that a very large number of boys and of young men have trouble over this matter, and that a large number of girls and women seek release from strain in this way.

There is a full discussion of the matter in Weatherhead's book, which all helpers of others would do well to read, as well as all sufferers through this annoying element in life. I do not wish to travel over the ground he covers so competently. I introduce this short chapter entirely in order to share my experience of the way in which people may be helped.

Young boys and girls ought to be helped by kindly parents never to make a beginning of the bad habit.

And never to begin is quite easy compared with the difficulty of breaking the habit once it is formed. Parents would do well also to realize that a sense of being repressed in their homes and by their elders is the commonest cause of this trouble with boys. Indeed I have heard an experienced doctor say that a sense of repression is always found in boys of this class. Later in life it is with both sexes more due to a restless longing for release from the strain of sexual desire which is not finding its normal expression.

Strange though it may appear to some, it is the fact that a great many people, otherwise high minded, become in some measure the victims of this habit. Religiously minded men and women who shun with utter abhorrence the very idea of irregular sex relations with the other sex none the less are much tempted to this mistake. And that is largely why I am writing about it. It annoys and worries the very people who are morally sensitive, and it causes an immense amount of secret distress and shame. I am always really glad when people have the courage to face it openly and honestly. For so soon as they seek help they have made deliverance much more likely.

Now I am quite clear that it *is* a bad habit. Indeed as a habit it has deplorable consequences. As an occasional means of escape from almost intolerable strain there is nothing serious about it. I know that certain experienced doctors, including certain good women doctors, actually recommend it in such circumstances. And I have no quarrel with them. But the people who have made a habit of it are

themselves practically unanimous in condemning it. They want to become free from its power. The bad thing about it is easily described. It is a sex experience into which no generous emotion of affection for another human being enters. It is a purely physical event. And the essential mark of a true sex experience is always that it is an event in which intense human and personal emotion takes command so that the body becomes merely a means towards the expression of love. Such experiences are unifying in their effect on our natures. Lonely experiences are more or less disrupting.

Now the one thing I want to say here is that those who want to help the victims of this trouble must in the first instance address themselves to the task of lessening the emotional strain which it has set up. Men and women certainly torture and torment themselves unnecessarily about the matter. And by their very feelings on the subject they are bound to their habit, and their humiliation. They magnify it till they fear and dread it, and then are helpless against it: It occupies so large a place in their thoughts that they *cannot* get it out of their lives. They need the help of somebody else to regain a sense of proportion. They need to talk with somebody who will refuse to fuss and worry about it, and who will treat it as a childish affair which a grown person can do without.

Of course it *is* a childish affair, and mature people should have left it behind. We think biting one's nails is something that belongs to childhood, and so abstain from doing it. In some such way

numbers have found their way of deliverance in this other matter.

It is well known that men have prayed most fervently about this trouble and then got up from their knees to give way again and at once. The explanation of that is that by their prayer they had fixed their minds just where they ought not to be fixed. What we must do if we are to help those who come to us is to refuse to be portentous and solemn about the matter, and then to explain that the way of escape is to learn to dwell in thought in quite other regions. Men and women are often astonishingly ashamed of themselves in this connection. It helps them at once when they find that somebody they trust is not ashamed, and can continue to respect them. I have helped quite a number of people, and especially women, by telling them what they had never imagined, namely that quite a lot of very fine people have been troubled in this way, and that their liability to this mistake does not mark them off as weak, despicable, and low-minded. People think that there must be something very far wrong with them because they are liable to sex temptation of any sort. And the truth, of course, is that we are all liable to sex temptation, and that there is nothing shameful in the fact whatever. It belongs to our destiny, and with the rarest exceptions we are all in this fight together. I am sure we all need to be much kinder to one another in this connection, and that so we might escape together from the clouds of unnecessary shame and distress which wrong ideas of sex have

created around us. When we do that we shall also be in a position to escape from sex mistakes and follies with greatly increased ease. Here as elsewhere we do not help people by condemning them, or by joining in the condemnations which they impose on themselves. We help them by faith and love. We help them by inspiring in them a conception of themselves which will lift them above all undignified, foolish and wasteful uses of their humanity.

There are times in the lives of many people when clamant sex desire produces torment. Such times need not come in the lives of those who have never been awakened by love, if they have managed themselves wisely through the days of their youth. But when men or women who have been partakers in an ardent love affair are then parted by death or misunderstanding, or when men become widowers and wives widows, or when wives are deserted, or when married persons are parted for a time for *any* reason good or bad, then those elements in our natures which have been quickened into life and can no longer find normal expression do impose on us an intense and difficult problem. *In the end renunciation has to be achieved*, for there is no way back to life by lonely sex experiences. But that such people should be called on to condemn and despise themselves if they take at times the one way of release from strain that seems open to them is not right. I want all my friends to reach that adjustment of themselves which will exclude all such things. I always believe that in



the end they will. I know lonely sex experience is a poor thing. But I think the attitude of mind which I have tried to indicate in these few pages is essential in all those who want to help any of the men or women in that great multitude who suffer over this matter.

## PART III

# SPECIALLY FOR MINISTERS

### CHAPTER XVI

#### MAKING YOURSELF ACCESSIBLE

THE first essential to a true ministry is to achieve real contact with people, and then to attain to relations of confidence with them.

And here our professional status, though partially a help, is also a very serious hindrance. We are supposed to be constantly disapproving of so many things that ordinary people do. And therefore ordinary people fight shy of us. We are supposed to be utterly uninterested in so many of the things that ordinary people care about that they feel they do not know how to talk to us.

I remember a group of Scotch officers in France who told me one evening at the front, that though their families all belonged to congregations, they themselves had never spoken to their ministers, and did not want to. They felt they would be uncomfortable in a minister's society. I talked quite lately to a little group of perfectly charming young men and women in the later twenties, to whom apparently religion meant little or nothing. They were quite frank about it all, and told me among other things

that they had never got past a feeling of discomfort in the presence of their minister. I knew him for an earnest, conscientious, and highly educated, if rather dull, man. And the real truth was that he had never really met those delightful girls and those most lovable men. Yet those young folk had some pretty serious problems in their lives, and were not satisfied with themselves. Only it seemed to them that their minister was "always wanting to save them," and from the idea of being put through a process of "being saved" they shrank. And so their most real needs remain unmet. And they are such splendid material.

Nor is it merely our professional status that creates a gulf between us and the people for whose sake we exist. I met this year a young woman who had been married to a minister for three years, and had met a number of his friends in the ministry. Half-jocularly I asked her what she thought of ministers. At once she replied, "Oh, they are all 'the great I am'!" Pretty severe! But terribly often true. My best man friend told me once that as a young minister I was "simply intolerable," so that I ought to speak with a chastened voice. But the snare into which I fell has caught great numbers of us. It is partly the pulpit that does it. For an hour and a half on end we are allowed to be the centre of the piece in a gathering of people. We ought to forget ourselves entirely, and think only of the Lord to whom we bear witness. But in fact, and often unconsciously, we become possessed by a sense of our own importance. We take ourselves so very seri-

ously. We come to expect that anything we say shall be listened to with respect. We become bad listeners, and that is fatal to true human contacts. I suppose that is how it was possible for one of my colonels in the army to tell me that he and a group of friends, who were all interested in religion, made it a rule never to discuss religion when a clergyman was present.

Because we believe that Christian truth is absolute truth, we become dogmatic and vehement. We are apt to be impatient with all who even ask questions about it, though it may be that they are only trying to understand. Because people remain unimpressed by us and our presentation of truth we are inwardly indignant, and so enter on a wrong attitude to others. We of course are impressed by our own sermons, and then are apt to be hurt and affronted because others are not. But an attitude of indignation or resentment or contempt towards ordinary people is a quite fatal preparation for any true ministry among them.

I know of no way past these obstacles except one that involves humiliation for us ministers. When we have faced the fact that we are full of faults, such as pride, personal ambition, vanity, and self-importance, and have been down on our knees before God about it all, we shall arise softened and humbled, able to see other people as our fellow-sinners, and so ready and eager to move nearer God *with* them. After that there will be very little professionalism left in us. And if many people continue to set snares for us by pious-sounding flattery, or by con-

ventional deferences, or even by putting us on a pedestal and bowing before it—if these or other such pitiful things happen to us, we shall escape their deadly influence if we continue to bend in the dust before God.

Then a great many of us are shy. I have often asked myself why so many shy men are attracted to the ministry, and I have never found the answer. But there is the fact. We feel awkward in the society of ordinary men, and still more so in the society of ordinary women. We do not “mix” easily, and as I have already said, the ordinary laity do not know how to talk to us.

If they did they could not possibly fall back so often on asking us whether we know some other minister called Smith or Robinson who came from their part of the country. This shyness of ours, and that shyness which we create in them, produce between them ludicrous situations. But Christian ministers ought not to be the causes of ludicrous situations.

And so I ask what is to be done. And the answer is this—Let us face the fact that our shyness is a form of self-consciousness, and that it torments us only because we have not attained to self-forgetfulness. I believe the psychologists, who have some very uncomfortable ways, call shyness inverted conceit. Horrid suggestion! But miserably true for all that. We are shy because we are wondering what others are thinking of us. We stutter and stumble in speech, and grow red in the face because we are afraid that others are thinking our remarks

are futile; and we cannot be happily silent either because we are afraid that in that case others will consider us negligible quantities. And in real truth most ordinary people are far too good-hearted to think any of these things. I have been through agonies of shyness in my time, but I discovered long ago that I was never shy when I was really interested in other people, and wanted to hear what they had to say. I was never shy when I forgot all about myself in interest in them—their joys and sorrows, needs and problems. I have never reached the point of “not caring two hoots” what others think of me, and I do not know that I want to. But I have escaped from shyness by forgetting all about that essentially secondary consideration.

These have been important preliminary considerations, but still the question of this chapter remains unanswered: “How are we to attain to real contact with real people?” It is not enough to say by way of answer, “By sharing their ordinary interests, and joining in their ordinary life.”

I do not believe in the convention that would give ministers a place apart from all ordinary sports and social recreations, for the simple reason that we also need exercise and relaxation. But let us beware of assuming that sharing in people's games and amusements will necessarily give us real access to them. There was a kind of padre in the war who was described as “all man and no padre,” and he was by common consent classed even below the other kind who was described as “all padre and no man.” Nor is it enough to be able to talk intelligently about

business or politics or literature or art. These things are good in themselves, but the discussion of them does not constitute a road into the special ministry I am talking of. Sometimes laymen have gone away from such conversations saying, "Well, So-and-so is an able chap, but he is not the sort of man I could turn to in any real trouble."

No! The one road of access is a real interest in the actual experiences of ordinary people, which will involve the power to perceive what are the contents of others' lives. Sometimes those contents are obvious. In your little community at any one point of time there will probably be one or two bereaved people, one or two invalids, one or two happy couples newly married or about to be married, one or two young mothers with proud and shy husbands in the background, one or two, or ten or twenty, business men in great anxiety, and perhaps one or two persons fairly openly slipping into vice.

It is of the very essence of our high calling to be able to sympathize sincerely with all these people, and to be willing to take on us a share of their burdens and their joys. And if we begin by responding to these obvious human needs we shall be on our way to more intimate forms of fellowship.

For there will be other people in need whose cases are not so easily discerned—lonely people, cramped people, repressed people, people who are afraid, feverishly restless people, disappointed people, people whose hearts have been wounded, people in all sorts of love troubles, people unhappy in their homes, irritable people, despairing people, proud but miser-

able people, people who have made really serious mistakes, people in deep spiritual distress—and so on. It is equally our business to learn to see the truth about such people, to understand them, to be very kind in thought to them, and to be ready for any opportunities that may come to us to help them. Above all, it is our essential business to love them.

And if by the help of God we can attain and keep that attitude—if forgetting ourselves we can go out to others in interest, appreciation, and affection, those others will infallibly get to know that we are waiting for them. They will recognize us. I once knew a woman who lived in this attitude. She came one day to Swanwick during a student conference to see one friend. But it happened she had to wait for an hour and half. During that period three separate students came and opened their hearts to her. They had never met her before and did not know her name. I asked her how they knew she was “that sort.” She could only reply, “I don’t know.” I cannot explain this. But I know it constantly happens. They will come gladly and it may be in numbers to open their hearts to us. And then we shall have found our calling.

At this point I nearly added the words “And not before.” But I refrain. “All members have not the same office.” God must need in His church ecclesiastical administrators, scholarly teachers, prophetic preachers, and ardent social reformers. God forbid that I should fail to render them my tribute of honour. But I write these words for ordinary



working ministers—for the men who are going to find themselves confronted with a congregation, large or small, of ordinary human beings, and who want to be good pastors to them. And of such I do say that they have not discovered their real calling until they have come into intimate contact with the varied needs of men and women such as I have indicated above.

For this part of our ministry we must find time and appoint places. When we are waiting in spirit, and others know that about us, it is still very important to make actual meetings easy and simple. Pastoral visitation seldom solves this problem. We so seldom get individuals alone when we visit, and even when we do they may not be ready for us. Something else is needed. Many men have found it a good plan to fix and announce times when they will be available either in their homes or their vestries. And then once it is known that a man is willing to give himself to such service of others, people will write and themselves suggest times. But it is really important to pay attention to this practical consideration, especially at first. After a time this ministry will seem to go on by its own momentum, for people will send each other.

And now when you are face to face with someone in trouble what is to be done. Probably at first you will feel a little afraid, and rather helpless as the real troubles of real people are opened out to you. You may feel embarrassed, and often you will feel that you simply do not know what to say. If you meet these people with conventional religious exhorta-

tions, you will promptly put an end to this ministry so far as you are concerned. But what else are you to say, especially at first?

Fortunately the first thing that is required of us is that we be good listeners. The real need of many people who come to us is just the need of someone to whom they can "tell all about it." And when they have in this way shared their burden they experience an immediate release. Many of them have carried within them a secret burden, or a secret shame, or a gnawing perplexity till these things have grown out of all proportion to their real importance, and only by getting someone else to look at their troubles with them can they recover their sense of proportion. I have helped one or two people simply by laughing with them at the bogies which had come to seem monsters.

And even when the shame or the perplexity is really great it is still true that to talk honestly about it to someone else is the first step towards escape. I have seen a woman changed, and changed permanently, in an hour, because she had at last stopped crushing all her feelings down and had let the dammed-up emotions of years escape. She literally cried with relief, and her tears marked a first momentous step towards health.

Then I remember a man who told me a story which greatly perplexed me, and even while I was wondering what on earth I ought to say to him, he suddenly got up and said, "Well, thank you more than I can say, you have helped me enormously." And I had done exactly nothing except listen.

But our listening must be very patient. Few people find the telling of their story easy. They often begin a hundred miles away from the point they wish to reach. Often they begin by pretending to themselves and to you that they want to discuss some theological issue, when the truth is that they have just come through a horrid row in their homes, or made some serious mistake in conduct. But they will get there in time, if you give them time.

An exceedingly able and deeply religious woman once asked me to go for a walk with her. She talked for half an hour in an able and interesting way about a variety of matters, and then I said to her, "All this is very interesting, but I don't believe that any of these things are what you really wanted to discuss with me." To which she replied, "Of course they are not, and I'll get there if you will only give me time." I gave her time, and she got there. But it took another three-quarters of an hour. I think men find the matter even more difficult than women. I have known a man fail entirely through a first talk and only partially succeed in a second one. We ministers are not always good listeners. We are not always patient with what seem to us to be the round-about methods of lay minds. The illogical and inconsistent talk of people in distress may weary or irritate us if we do not take care. We do not realize that sometimes that is the only way in which people can unburden themselves of their real troubles.

I was once really amused as well as saddened by an incident in this connection. I had a friend in the

ministry of very great philosophical power, and with a very quick and accurate mind. I persuaded him to attempt the kind of ministry I have been describing, and at first people came to him. But they never came back, and presently no more came. I felt that I knew exactly what had happened. After a few halting sentences from his visitor, my friend felt that he sensed some problem, and so he broke in with a beautifully phrased, clear, and adequate intellectual answer to that problem, and forthwith the conversation dried up. I am sure that none of his visiting friends ever got their real story told.

A point of real importance arises here, as to the asking of questions by such ministers as are consulted. At first my instinct was all against asking *any* questions. I would have said then, "I want my friends to tell me as much as they want to tell, and to keep in reserve what they want to keep. They have a right to their own secrets." But later experience has led me to modify that attitude for two reasons. The first is that sometimes one can help people by asking the right questions to get out what they want to get out. And the other is that sometimes one can understand nothing till people tell more than at first they seem inclined to tell. They do not always keep back part of the truth for good reasons. They are trying to escape facing some of it. In that case, of course, they cannot be healed, and if sensitive persuasion can help them to face everything such persuasion is a kindness. And yet still I would like to say, "Be cautious, and respect people's personalities."

And, of course, it cannot possibly be too strongly said that unless we will regard as absolutely sacred all the confidences given us, we are not fit for this work at all. Your friends *must* be sure that through you no one else will ever come to know.

And so I return to our sense of helplessness. We do something, I say, by listening patiently. But it must be patience entirely divorced from criticism or blame. That is utterly essential. You must never seem shocked. You must never proceed to judge. Judging is not your business. Your friends will come for help, not to be told that they are wicked. And that is true even when the story told you seems a shameful one. There is a man now in England who was once a friend of mine, and whom I would like to have still for a friend. But I lost him because when he brought to me the story of his trouble and failure I let him see very clearly that I thought he had acted a mean and cowardly part. Perhaps he had, but I lost my chance of helping him by being so stupid. And he was very truly worth helping.

Then secondly we do something, and often a great deal, by being sympathetic. To have found someone who will first face with you all the truth about your sorrow or your sin, and who will then feel *with* you about it, and show he is your friend all the more because of your need—that is a great experience. And we might give it to many. We have all failed so often, and we all know so much about making foolish mistakes that we ought to be able to sympathize. I would even say it is worth

our while to go out of our way to tell these friends of ours that we have been tempted like as they are or have made similar mistakes. And if any ministers still exist who think that they ought to keep up the pretence that a minister is a person above all such things, I would like to say to them that really they do not know the first thing about the priestly office.

But more than mere sympathy is needed. We must go on to insist on believing in people whatever may be the sad stories they have to tell. We have warrant for believing in them, for God believes in them. The very secret of Christ's method in saving people was to begin by appreciating, and believing in them, so that He kindled hope in them. Many people come to us who have lost all belief in themselves, and all hope. They will shrivel yet further under blasts of criticism. But there are few if any who will not begin to blossom out under the rays of appreciation and faith and affection.

And yet all these things—listening, sympathy, and faith in people—are mere general preliminaries, and assuredly are not enough. Mere listening may leave the real problem untouched. Mere sympathy may have an enervating effect, and can degenerate into a sort of mental coddling of people which is very bad for them. And mere believing in people can become almost futile, just as the continuous declaration that "it will be all right in the end" can become quite maddening to people who are finding it all wrong in the meantime.

No! We must learn how to deal in a more penetrating way with the actual condition of distressed souls. We *must* learn the right thing to say. We can only learn bit by bit, and inevitably we fail often in our early days. A woman minister of great experience and distinction once told me that the only thing that plunges her into depression now is the memory of the people with whom she had entirely failed, and whom she had even misled in days gone by. I understand that depression. Most fervently do I wish that I could ask the forgiveness of a number of men and women who have come to me and then gone away to face the pain of one more disappointment. I did not understand. I could not help.

But admitting that, it is also true that inevitably experience brings knowledge—both our own personal experience of God, and experience of other people. One friend helps you to help another. You begin to recognize the signs of deep-seated maladjustments, and of fears and repressions, though people have said nothing about them. And so you get the key to one problem after another. You will be cheered by occasional successes, and so you take heart and go on. You know you are at your real work. You believe that God will help you. You are able to persevere.

## CHAPTER XVII

### MORE PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

I SAID at the end of the last chapter, " You believe that God will help you." Do you? You had better get the answer clear to that question before you take any further steps towards the ministry. If after being honest with yourself you find that you are really expecting to have to carry the burden of the ministry in your own strength, and guided merely by your own wisdom, then give it up. Become a bank clerk, or a stockbroker, or a commercial traveller, or a farmer. I believe these are all difficult callings, but they are easy and happy compared with the torment of being a minister without any clear conviction that God will see you through. Attempted in a man's own strength, the ministry is a continuous crucifixion.

But if you do believe in God's help you will get strange and gracious proofs of His help in connection with the service of individuals. I have for many years believed in " Guidance " though I did not employ that modern term. Over and over again when utterly perplexed by somebody's need, I have turned even while that somebody was yet



speaking, to silent prayer for direction. And later I have heard my mouth uttering sentences which I had not consciously thought out. I have seemed to be the instrument of somebody else. Or I have had given to me flashes of insight which guided me through the rest of my talk. And so I have faded out of the picture, and just felt that through me my friend was feeling certain truths which had the stamp of God upon them.

Without such experiences I could not have gone on. "It's a dangerous thing to play with souls, and matter enough to save one's own," says Browning. And so it is, if we work alone. A soul is such a delicate and sensitive thing. Our coarse and clumsy tongues may so easily hurt even when we want to help. But we do not work alone. We may dare to go on.

That, however, suggests another consideration.

If God will tell us by inward guidance what to say in every case, what place is left for the deliberate study of human problems? In that case is not all modern psychological study simply an unnecessary and fussy activity from the point of view of the Christian minister? Is not this book therefore a mere waste of time for writer and reader alike? And if that be so, must we not go further and ask, Why study the Gospels in order to understand the mind of Christ if inward guidance will always be given us for managing our own lives and for advising other people? Indeed, why try to think! Why try to use our consciences if all that is required of us is listening! Why, in fact, try to be in any sense

active persons, if all that we really need to do is to offer ourselves as passive means through which the Gracious Spirit may find entrance to the lives of others!

Here there towers over us the whole insistent problem of "Grace and Personality." What room is there for man if God is all in all? How can any man grow into fullness of life, and become in any sense capable of the divine communion, if he is first reduced to the level of a passive machine moved from without? That is a problem which the theologians of the Group Movement will find they cannot escape. But I do not propose to be tempted to any theological discussion of it. Let those who wish to pursue that path begin by reading Principal Oman's *Grace and Personality*, and it may be that when they have understood that book they will not need any other.

For my part I am concerned only with the practical answer which experience supplies. The plain man knows quite well that he must needs use both reason and conscience, and that he is more, and not less, able to receive divine guidance when he does so. The man who really studies the mind of Christ and attains some measure of understanding of it, is made thereby much more sensitive to all other forms of divine guidance. Moreover, he has a standard by which to test his "guidance." For into what they call their guidance most men impart a mixture of their own, compounded of their received ideas, their traditions, and their prejudices. And they may go far astray unless they bring their conclusions into the

light which shines from Christ. Up to a point sound learning and spiritual sensitiveness need each other.

But if study of the mind of Christ is needed, so in different degrees are other forms of study. Those who have taken pains to understand people will prove better instruments for God to use in helping them. The more we know of men and women physically, psychologically, and morally, the better for us if we are to be ministers to their souls. And that fact suggests some rather different studies for ministers than those usually included in a theological curriculum. The men who have graduated in medicine, and then taken a course in theology, and finally gone deeply into psychology ought to be the real masters in this department of service. I thank God for the men who are thus equipped. Thousands of people have reasons for sharing my gratitude. I wish there were more of them. Unfortunately for the ordinary minister a course like that is impossible. And yet we may take comfort. For the psychologists themselves admit that many cases of neurosis and obsession which baffle them might be completely and permanently cured by a spiritual experience which was complete and sincere. There must be to-day in the world a large number of people who have been delivered from manifold troubles, and ushered into life through the ministrations of simple people, who had themselves had a gracious experience of God, but who know nothing about psychology and care less.

None the less I believe in the usefulness of the

study of modern psychology for ministers. There are plenty snares. Some become devotees of one special type of psychology, and see everything in the light of the special tenets of that school. Some talk psychological jargon which repels ordinary people, and sounds much wiser than it really is. Some come to think so much about psychology that they forget the Gospel; and some see people as cases and forget that they are human beings who need love. Yet still I believe it is a good thing for ministers to study psychology. I am not sure that it need come into a college course. Only the people who are actually in intimate contact with real men and women can appreciate its significance. It is rather to young ministers that I would commend it. Often it will give them the key to the understanding of somebody whose needs would otherwise baffle them. Assuredly it should save them from trying to cure by argument people whose phobias, illusions, and depressions are essentially non-rational, and are recognized by the persons themselves to be so. Always it will lead them to look elsewhere than in the present for the explanation of most of people's sufferings and follies. It is a very bad master for a minister, but it is a good servant.

Every now and then people will come to us who need much more thorough psychological treatment than we can give them. Some extreme cases need deep analysis. And then the only thing to do is to send them on, if possible, to a really good psychologist. It may not be possible. Private treatment is very dear, and clinics are both few in number and

overcrowded. No doubt ere long things will improve in this respect.

But let us be very slow to admit that nothing but psychological treatment can help a given man or woman. Jesus saw deeply and clearly into the truth about the people He met. His treatment of them implies acute psychological insight. But He did not treat men and women by the methods of analysis which may take months. He cast out devils by the power of His spirit. He brought to bear on poor sufferers the force of His clear radiant spirit—of His creative love—of His unshakable certainty about God, and in consequence old fears fled away and old delusions vanished. Courage and the will to live were kindled. Self-deceptions were surrendered, and forthwith people found life.

He waits to do the same things now. We cannot do them, but if we can bring people to Him, He can and will. That old phrase "bringing people to Christ" describes exactly what our function is. It is a very difficult function, but it is the one to which we are dedicated. And that is the peculiar office of the minister as distinguished from the psychologist.

We talk about giving people our friendship, offering them our sympathy, believing in them, and helping them in practical ways. And all these are good. But if that were all that we can do it would be better to give up this ministry, for that is not enough. When we have got close to people, and they and we together have discovered their real troubles, there comes a point over and over again when clearly what is needed by them is some new

impulse of life, some new secret of courage and energy. I have had a number of people come back to me after treatment by psychologists, who said, "We now understand ourselves, and see what must be done, but *we can't do it*. We simply have not got the necessary energy of being." Plenty people have also said that to me, who had not been to psychologists.

What is our answer to them? We have *no* adequate answer unless we know for ourselves that those who throw themselves on God in real surrender do receive from Him new life and power. And we cannot help the majority of people unless we can help them to find their way to that redeeming experience. The whole of this ministry I am writing about implies that we are fundamentally witnesses to a saving truth of experience. Our essential office is to lead people to God. If we can achieve that all is well. We may drop out of the picture. Even our faults will no longer matter. The persons concerned may go to the ends of the earth and we may see them no more. It does not matter. If we have led them to a living knowledge of God through Christ, He will do all the rest, and for ever.

Bringing men to a knowledge of God through Christ is a very many sided and complex work. No one method will avail for all people. Often much has to be cleared away out of their minds before they are ready for Christ. Often they have to be shown the truth about themselves, and that process hurts. Most of this book has been concerned with many of

the details of that work. But let us be quite clear from the outset what it is that we are really trying to do. It is *not* merely making friends of people. It is *not* an offering of ourselves to them, though both these may help. It is essentially an effort to lead them beyond us to a knowledge of Him in whom alone lie our peace and our health, our power and our joy.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MINISTERS AND WOMEN

THERE are thousands of women and girls who wish intensely that they could find some minister to whom they could give their confidence and from whom they could ask advice, and who declare that they cannot find one.

They want a minister because they want someone who will not speak for himself alone, but who will bring to their problems the light that Christ gives, and who will speak out of wide experience. They want a man's help because often it is only a man's view of the situation which will be of any use to them. They have got the woman's view already.

This is one of the ways in which the sexes can help each other. But such women often say that the ministers they know are of no use to them. Some are always in a hurry, and seem so busy that they have no time to listen. Some seem absorbed in intellectual pursuits, or in public service, and give no evidence of interest in the individual's problems. Some are so dogmatic, and so utterly sure of themselves, that souls in trouble feel that they could not offer anybody understanding sympathy. Some



assume attitudes so stern and unbending that both men and women who have made mistakes shrink away. Some fail altogether to embody the charity of Christ.

But beyond all, a great many ministers give the impression that they have never tried to understand women. Some are afraid of women. Some betray sex antagonism. Some despise the sex. Worse still, some can trifle with women, and deal in chaff and banter, but never take women seriously. They are obviously ignorant of the most significant facts about women, and even share in the foolish superficial conventional male views of the opposite sex. Some really seem to share in the amusing male view that because women are in many respects different from men, they must to that extent be wrong.

A great many married ministers, if they were honest, would have to admit that while they truly love one woman, they are uninterested in all other women, and have never seriously tried to learn how to help them. They criticize the women of their acquaintance, and recognize their obvious faults and failings, but have never stopped to ask themselves *why* Mrs. X is so restless and self-assertive, why Mrs. Y is so depressed, why Mrs. Z is such a queer and awkward creature, why Miss A is so plainly sad and worried, or what troubles Miss B is hiding under that proud exterior, or what has broken Miss C. Generally we learn to appreciate the kindly and efficient women who serve the church so nobly, but how many of us also ask ourselves

why so many have failed to achieve adjustment and serenity!

And as for young girls, I declare I believe many ministers share in the delusion that all girls are naturally good. They *are* gay and attractive, and often good to look at; so ministers assume that they need no help in this most difficult life. And then later on they wonder why such satisfactory girls have developed into such unsatisfactory wives, and such disgruntled spinsters.

I suspect that very often behind this general neglect of women's needs, and this avoidance of intimate knowledge of their troubles, there lies fear. Men are afraid that if they did make friends of women awkward situations might arise. Some men are afraid that they themselves would become amorous, and many are afraid that women would become foolish or exacting, or sentimental, and so a bother. Here, too, a deadly truth emerges. Many ministers, like millions of laymen, *only* think of women as members of a dangerous sex—persons to be avoided, or flirted with, and in any case always liable to exhibit sex emotion. Of women as personalities with many varied powers, and many varied needs, they know almost nothing. Of the strains and stresses which are inherent in a woman's life they are ignorant. About women as souls they have hardly thought at all.

Can this not be remedied? Can we ministers not rise above this foolish superficial attitude? Can we not learn to meet the daughters of God without any disturbing sex consciousness, and come to know

them as minds, as personalities, and as spirits? Thousands of women want a minister's help that they may find God, that they may achieve adjustment to life, that they may gain courage. Can we not fit ourselves for this ministry by an honest, common-sense, open attitude of mind towards them?

We should find, if we tried, that women who turn to us in times of need do not want any silly response to their femininity from us, but that they *do* want any help that we can give them out of our experience, our knowledge, and our understanding of God. Of course they need sympathy from us, but it is sympathy of exactly the same kind as we give to men, and all our work ought to be done in the atmosphere of sympathy.

Nowadays and often women make great demands on our minds. For my part I have found more women than men intensely concerned with the intellectual problems of our day. The most acute minds I have met have been masculine minds. But I have found a larger percentage of women given to serious thought than of men. Such modern books as I have, which are relevant to the real issues of the mental life of our time, have more often been borrowed from me by women than by men. Often, too, women will test to the utmost our understanding of the life of the spirit, for many of them are intent on finding in its fullness the true spiritual life for which we were made. Again and again it will seem that women have turned to us because they think that we are good or strong, and while

that will greatly humble us, it will also constitute a new call to attempt to rise to the great opportunities and responsibilities of our calling. If women can believe in our charity they will also tell us quite frankly about their sins, and so they will give us a priceless opportunity to lead them to that knowledge of the forgiveness of God, which alone brings liberation.

In plain English many ministers avoid this service because they are afraid that if they show friendship to women, those women will fall in love with them. This danger is vastly exaggerated.

Firstly, because we are not so attractive as all that.

Secondly, because many of those who seek our help will seek it because they are already in love with somebody else, and because owing to circumstances their love has brought them bitter pain. And they need the help of some understanding friend more than they need anything else.

Thirdly, because the problems of such women will often turn out to be of a quite impersonal kind, in connection with which it is impersonal help and advice that are needed.

I do not mean to imply that there is no likelihood that in some of these cases deep affection may not spring up between a minister and the women concerned. Nor do I forget that the existence of such deep affection may constitute a real temptation to some ministers to do foolish things. I would never suggest that any part of the Christian ministry is unaccompanied by danger. And I would certainly

strongly advise the unmarried minister, as long as he is under sixty, to leave this particular service to others.

But having said that, I go on to say that I see nothing to regret and a great deal for which to thank God when sincere and restrained affection grows up between a minister and the women whom he serves. The great rewards of my life have been friendships. As I turn in mind to the many men and women with whom my heart is concerned, and who out of the generosity of their hearts have given me affection in return, I realize that such friendships constitute the real wealth of life. Through them I maintain in a large measure my communion with God, from whom all true love comes. These so greatly valued friends of mine are of both sexes in about equal proportions. I feel there must be something utterly mistaken in any view of life which would suggest any criticism of that fact. I would say to any minister with a convinced mind, "If in the course of your work you win the affection of any man or any woman you win a priceless thing. See to it that you always accept the love of any fellow-man or woman with reverence, and that you try to fulfil the obligations which it imposes on you. And if you find that such affection is a most rewarding and joyful possession, see to it that you thank God who is the ultimate Giver of all such good things."

Because a passionate relationship is possible between a man and a woman, we have allowed ourselves to become blind to all the other possibilities

of many sided friendships between man and woman. That is one of the consequences of the fact that we are so fatally sex obsessed. I believe that both men and women must remain painfully restricted in life, and that the true wealth and warmth of that life which is our destiny can never be discovered until we escape from that foolish obsession.

And I really believe that in the course of that ministry which is laid upon us by the obligations of our calling we ministers might do a great deal to demonstrate that the obsession is indeed foolish.

And so I come back in conclusion to the point from which I started. The Gospel which we live to proclaim is indeed a revelation of the way of life—and the only way—for men and women one by one. But if we are to lead people to a perception of that for themselves it must be by the way of entering ourselves through the door of sympathy into their joys and sorrows, their mistakes, their follies, and their sins. Our ministry must be essentially a ministry of friendship, and the friendship will often cost us a great deal in time, in patience, in suffering. It will demand of us that we attain to a faith in mankind, which I believe we can only attain if we live in close contact with the mind and heart of Christ.

But it will also bring us exceeding great rewards, for a ministry of friendship will bring us friends. If love to God, and love to man taken together constitute human life at its highest and best—and that is the Christian doctrine—then this ministry will bring us to the life that is life indeed. If that

happened there would be on our faces the light of a very real joy.

We might then be often weary because our calling is very exacting, but we could not be inwardly depressed. We should find that fellowship with men and women in the things of the Gospel is a crowning joy.







